



## ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

FELICITY JONES LEADS THE PACK IN THE BIGGEST SPIN-OFF MOVIE EVER

**ASSASSIN'S CREED** ON SET WITH MICHAEL FASSBENDER & MARION COTILLARD **FANTASTIC BEASTS & WHERE TO FIND THEM** COLIN FARRELL ON HIS ERM, WAND SKILLS **NOCTURNAL ANIMALS** AARON TAYLOR-JOHNSON'S A CHARISMATIC PSYCHOPATH **SGIFF 2016** 12 DAYS, 161 FILMS **TOP 10 WOMEN ON TOP AND MORE...**

NOV/DEC 2016 • ISSUE 81/82




The background of the poster features a massive, curved metallic structure, likely the Death Star, dominating the upper right portion of the frame. Below it, two X-wing starfighters are shown in flight, leaving a trail of smoke. In the center, the Imperial Star Destroyer, the Devastator, is seen from a low angle, appearing to rise from the sea. At the bottom, two Imperial stormtroopers are standing on a beach, looking out towards the horizon. The sky is a mix of blue and white clouds.

# ROGUE ONE

A **STAR WARS** STORY™

IN CINEMAS DEC 15

 StarWarsSG

IN 3D, REAL D 3D AND IMAX 3D

#GoRogueSG





Rating To Be Advised

IMAX® is a registered trademark of IMAX Corporation.

©2016 & TM Lucasfilm Ltd.



## S&amp;M 04

Stars &amp; Madhatters

06 NEWS &amp; EVENTS

16 FIRST LOOK

16



21



26



32



26 NOCTURNAL ANIMALS

- Aaron Taylor-Johnson

32 ASSASSIN'S CREED

- The Production

38 - What's What?

For Editorial matters, email us at [Ed@sterne-lears.com](mailto:Ed@sterne-lears.com)For Sales & Marketing enquiries, email us at [colin@sterne-lears.com](mailto:colin@sterne-lears.com)To express your opinions, email us at [F@sterne-lears.com](mailto:F@sterne-lears.com)

- Publisher/Editor-in-Chief **Royston LOH** • Sub Editor **Balvinder SANDHU** • News Editor/Writer **Jedd JONG**
- Contributors **Shawne WANG** • **Leslie WONG** • **Jonathan SUNG** • Art Director **mKwan**
- Senior Designer **Yming** • Managing Director • **Wendy CHUA** • Deputy Director **JS LOH**
- Business Development **Cornelius (Colin) LOH**

## STERNE &amp; LEARS GLOBAL

[www.fmoviemag.com](http://www.fmoviemag.com)

F\*\*\* is published by Sterne & Lears Global Pte Ltd  
71 Ayer Rajah Crescent, #07-18. Singapore 139951

Distributed by Circulation Department, Singapore Press Holdings.  
Printed by Toppan Security Printing Pte. Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission of the publisher.  
The views and opinions expressed or implied in F\*\*\* are those of the authors or contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.  
All names, trademarks, illustrations and images used, with or without attribution, are copyrights of their respective owners.

Email : [f@sterne-lears.com](mailto:f@sterne-lears.com)

Company Registration No : 200923639Z  
MICA No: MICA (P) 114/01/2010

Press No: L017/10/2009

Front Cover Image:  
© 2016 & TM Lucasfilm Ltd.

Follow @Fmoviemag on





- 40 FANTASTIC BEASTS & WHERE TO FIND THEM  
- Colin Farrell
- 44 - Katherine Waterston
- 48 ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY  
- Felicity Jones
- 54 - Who's Who?
- 56 TOP 10 - Women On Top
- 64 Singapore International Film Festival 2016  
- Sneak Peek
- 66 - Sunny Pang
- 68 - Jerrold Chong



R(A) 70  
Reviews Anonymous

- 72 A STREET CAT NAMED BOB
- 73 BAD SANTA 2
- 74 BILLY LYNN'S LONG HALFTIME WALK
- 75 DEATH NOTE: LIGHT UP THE NEW WORLD
- 76 DENIAL
- 77 THE WARRIOR'S GATE (勇士之門)
- 78 I Am Not Madame Bovary (我不是潘金莲)
- 79 INCARNATE
- 80 MOANA
- 81 THE MENU (导火新闻线)
- 82 THE WHOLE TRUTH
- 83 SING
- 84 SUBSCRIPTION / PROMO
- 86 BACK ISSUES
- 88 LAST PAGE - Cinematic Greats



It's that time of the year again!

The time when you can do nothing at work but dream of that long-awaited year-end break.

In that dream, those who are travelling would have already posted *that* passport-with-boarding-pass shot on their social media. While those who are staying put would probably repeatedly recover from their hangovers to regret what they posted the night before...

And you know what? Movies play a big part in all these scenarios. Who doesn't look forward to those inflight movies, hoping for some magic to happen when we reach our destination; or those silly *Hangover*-kind of movies to substantiate and motivate the hard-core partying?

At the end of the day, post jet-lag or hangovers, it's always nice to treat ourselves to more mindless blockbusters that are made to squeeze us dry during this holiday season. So go check out our catalog inside for one – or more! – to gift yourselves :)

Happy holidays, and see you at the movies!



Royston Loh • Editor-in-Chief  
Royston@sterne-learns.com  
FB, IG, Twitter: @RoystonLoh







# \*\*\* S&M

STARS & MADHATTERS

**Sam Neill joins *Thor: Ragnarok*** *Peter Rabbit* welcomes Daisy Ridley, Margot Robbie and Elizabeth Debicki into the warren **Jon Favreau heads into a different jungle for *The Lion King*** Takashi Miike to direct *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* movie **Justin Lin is in the driver's seat for *Hot Wheels*** Benedict Cumberbatch and Nicholas Hoult fight *The Current War* **Steven Spielberg and Jack Ma ink deal** *Murder on the Orient Express* remake rounds up star-studded cast **Luke Evans to play the creator of *Wonder Woman* in biopic** Guy Ritchie in talks to direct live-action *Aladdin* **Live-action *Mulan* fast-tracked for 2018** *Paddington 2* will be a beary star-studded sequel **Donald Glover is young Lando** Tim Miller leaves *Deadpool 2* **Willy Wonka prequel being developed** Pottermore: five *Fantastic Beasts* movies planned **Leonardo DiCaprio producing *Captain Planet* movie** Boyd Holbrook replaces Benicio del Toro in *The Predator* **Eddie Redmayne and Tom Hiddleston to voice rivals in *Early Man*** Jennifer Lawrence and Scarlett Johansson take on duelling Zelda Fitzgerald biopics **Leonardo DiCaprio called to surrender *Wolf of Wall Street* pay**

Plus first look at:

**JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2**

THE GREAT WALL

**LOGAN**

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 2

**PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES**

And More...

## THE CLAWED CANUCK

Check out the first look of Hugh Jackman in the third, and apparently final, standalone Wolverine spin-off: *Logan*



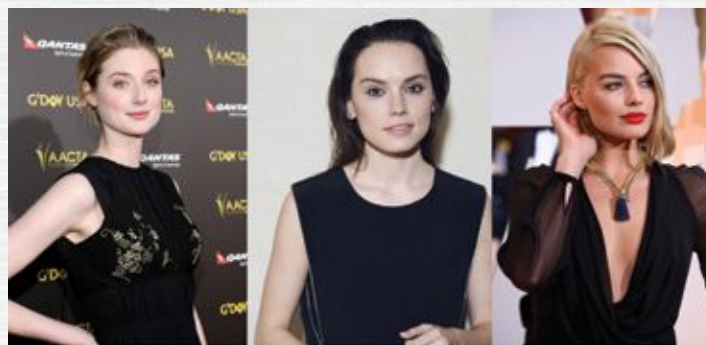


## Sam Neill joins *Thor: Ragnarok*

*Thor: Ragnarok*'s cast, which comprises names such as Cate Blanchett, Jeff Goldblum, Karl Urban and Tessa Thompson, in addition to returning Marvel Cinematic Universe stars Chris Hemsworth, Tom Hiddleston, Anthony Hopkins, Idris Elba and Mark Ruffalo, has added Sam Neill. Neill reunites with fellow New Zealander, director Taika Waititi, after starring in Waititi's adventure-comedy-drama *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*. "I'm not really allowed to say this and I can't tell you what it is... I did a couple of days on *Thor* just before I came over here," Neill told *Shortlist* while promoting *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*'s home video release with Waititi. "If I say anything else, Marvel's secret agents – and they are lethal – will come and get me and probably my children, as well," Neill said in jest (hopefully). *Thor: Ragnarok* will also be a mini *Jurassic Park* reunion, bringing Dr. Alan Grant and Dr. Ian Malcolm together again: here's hoping Neill and Goldblum share scenes. Principal photography for *Thor: Ragnarok* has just completed in Australia; the film is set for a November 2017 release date.

## *Peter Rabbit* welcomes Daisy Ridley, Margot Robbie and Elizabeth Debicki into the warren

The live-action/animation hybrid *Peter Rabbit* film, based on the beloved children's books by Beatrix Potter, has added Daisy Ridley, Elizabeth Debicki and Margot Robbie to the cast. They will be joining James Corden, who is voicing Peter, and Rose Byrne, who is playing the live-action part of 'Bea', presumably based on Potter herself. It's possible that Ridley, Robbie and Debicki will be voicing Peter's sisters Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail. The visual effects for *Peter Rabbit* will be handled by Australia-based Animal Logic studios, known for their work on *The Lego Movie*, *Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'hoole* and *Happy Feet*. *Peter Rabbit* will be directed by Will Gluck (*Easy A*, *Annie*). The character, known for running afoul of grumpy farmer Mr. McGregor, has appeared on the big screen in the biopic *Miss Potter*, starring Renee Zellweger and Ewan McGregor. Domhnall Gleeson will play Mr. McGregor. *Peter Rabbit* will hop into theatres in 2018.



## Takashi Miike to direct *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* movie

Hirohiko Araki's manga series *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure*, which has spawned animated films and an anime series, is now getting the live-action big-screen treatment. Director Takashi Miike, whose varied filmography includes the disturbing likes of *Audition* and *Ichii the Killer*, in addition to *Zeburaman*, *Yatterman* and this year's *Terra Formars*, is helming the film. *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* tells the story of the Joestar family; each family member possessing unique abilities with which they defeat supernatural foes. The film will mainly draw from the 'Diamond is Unbreakable' volume of the manga, with Kento Yamazaki starring as Josuke Higashikata. *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* will be jointly produced by Toho Studios and Warner Bros., and is set for a 2017 release.





YOUR DESTINY IS IN YOUR BLOOD



ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINEE  
MICHAEL  
FASSBENDER

ACADEMY AWARD® WINNER  
MARION  
COTILLARD

ACADEMY AWARD® WINNER  
JEREMY  
IRONS

# ASSASSIN'S CREED

IN CINEMAS  
DECEMBER 22 IN 3D

8 UNRATED

AssassinsCreedMovie.com #AssassinsCreedMovieSG

TM & © 2011





## Luke Evans to play the creator of Wonder Woman in biopic

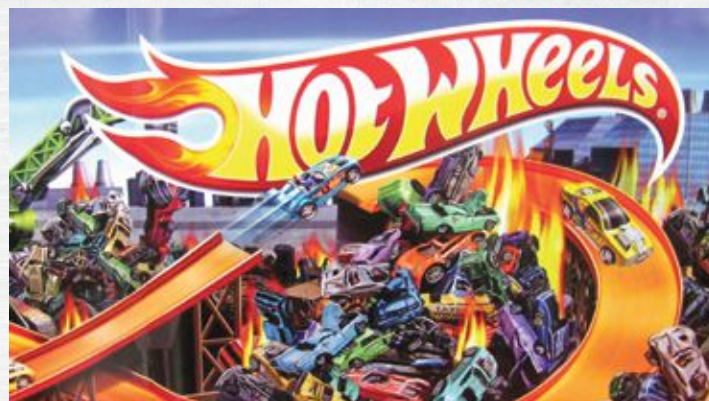


Wonder Woman is about to get the big screen treatment, and Sony is looking to tell the story of the man behind the iconic comic book character. William Moulton Marston was a colourful personality in his own right, a

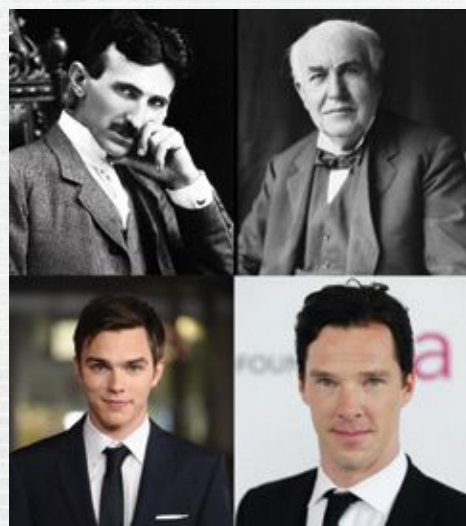
psychologist and inventor who invented an early 'lie detector' machine. Marston's private life raised eyebrows: he lived with both his wife and his mistress at the same time for a period of several years, and was into the sexual practice of BDSM. The biopic *Professor Marston and the Wonder Woman* will shed light on this figure, with Luke Evans set to play Marston. Joining him are Rebecca Hall as Marston's wife Elizabeth and Bella Heathcote as Marston's young mistress Olive. The release date has yet to be announced, but it will presumably be around the actual *Wonder Woman* movie's June 2017 opening.

## Justin Lin is in the driver's seat for *Hot Wheels*

Director Justin Lin is returning to the world of high speed automobiles, familiar territory for the *Fast & Furious* helmer. Lin has closed a deal to direct the *Hot Wheels* movie for Legendary Pictures, based on the toy line from Mattel. Details beyond Lin's involvement are scarce; the film has yet to secure a writer so it might be some time before those cars careen onscreen. The *Hot Wheels* toys have spawned a short-lived Saturday morning cartoon series that ran from 1969 to 1971. More recently, there were the animated TV shows and movies *World Race*, *AcceleRacers*, *Team Hot Wheels* and *Battle Force 5*, which had a sci-fi tinge.



## It's electrifying: Benedict Cumberbatch and Nicholas Hoult fight *The Current War*



The story of duelling inventors Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla is a riveting one, with many of us only learning much later about the amount of credit that Tesla was due; Edison looking like quite the scumbag in hindsight. In any case, we're all about to delve deeper into this matter with the historical drama *The Current War*. In the battle for which electrical current would become the world standard, Tesla

championed alternating current while Edison advocated direct current. Benedict Cumberbatch is starring as Edison, with Nicholas Hoult is in talks to play Tesla. Michael Shannon is playing Edison's competitor, George Westinghouse. Alfonso Gomez-Rejon (*Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*) is directing (alternating?) *The Current War*.



## Steven Spielberg and Jack Ma ink deal

Director Steven Spielberg and e-commerce mogul Jack Ma announced that Ma's Alibaba group is acquiring a minority stake in Spielberg's production company Amblin Entertainment. The investment is part of a strategic partnership that will see China's richest man becoming involved in film production, distribution and marketing in China and globally. The deal also includes the placement of an Alibaba representative in Amblin Partners, a content creation consortium founded by DreamWorks Studios, Participant Media, Reliance Entertainment and Entertainment One. "Our vision is to inspire and entertain audiences through creativity and imagination both here and around the world," Spielberg said at a press conference. Up to six to nine films a year are slated to be produced as part of the collaboration, but no titles have been announced.



EXPLORE A NEW ERA OF  
J.K. ROWLING'S WIZARDING WORLD

# FANTASTIC BEASTS

AND WHERE  
TO FIND THEM

WARNER BROS. PICTURES PRESENTS

HEYDAY FILMS PRODUCTION A DAVID YATES FILM "FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM"  
EDDIE REDMAYNE KATHERINE WATERSTON DAN FOGLER ALISON SUDOL EZRA MILLER  
SAMANTHA MORTON JON VOIGHT CARMEN EJOGO AND COLIN FARRELL

MUSIC BY JAMES NEWTON HOWARD COSTUME DESIGNER COLLEEN ATWOOD EDITOR MARK DAY PRODUCTION DESIGNER STUART CRAIG  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY PHILIPPE ROUSSELOT EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS TIM LEWIS NEIL BLAIR RICK SENAT WRITTEN BY J.K. ROWLING  
PRODUCED BY DAVID HEYMAN J.K. ROWLING STEVE KLOVES LIONEL WIGRAM DIRECTED BY DAVID YATES

FANTASTIC BEASTS RATING TO BE ADVISED

17 NOVEMBER SEE IT IN 3D AND IMAX 3D

ADVANCE TICKETS ON SALE NOW

SPECIAL ADVANCE SCREENINGS ON 16 NOVEMBER @ GV VIVOCITY AND SHAW THEATRES LIDO

Please check cinema websites for details





## Murder on the Orient Express remake rounds up star-studded cast

Agatha Christie's classic 1934 whodunit *Murder on the Orient Express* is returning to the big screen, with big names filling the ensemble. Kenneth Branagh, in addition to directing, will play iconic detective Hercule Poirot. Poirot is on board the titular train investigating the murder of Samuel Ratchett (Johnny Depp). Branagh and Depp are joined by Daisy Ridley as working-class woman Mary Debenham; Michelle Pfeiffer as the glamorous Mrs. Hubbard; Leslie Odom Jr. as Mary's love interest Dr. Arbuthnot; Judi Dench as Russian monarch Princess Dragomiroff; Tom Bateman as Frenchman Bouc; Michael Pena as Marquez; Lucy Boynton as Countess Andrenyi; and Derek Jacobi as Masterman. The 1974 film had a similarly glittery cast, including Albert Finney, Lauren Bacall, Sean Connery, John Gielgud and Ingrid Bergman. The producers on the remake include Ridley Scott and *X-Men*'s Simon Kinberg, with screenwriter Michael Green (*Blade Runner 2049*) adapting the novel.



## Jon Favreau heads into a different jungle for *The Lion King*

Following the success of this year's *The Jungle Book*, Disney and director Jon Favreau are planning a new take on another beloved animated film from the House of Mouse: *The Lion King*. The 1994 film, which was influenced by Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, was the highest-grossing release of that year. It went on to spawn a blockbuster stage musical, which is the top earning Broadway production of all time. The remake of *The Lion King* will feature songs from the animated film by Elton John and Tim Rice, and it is expected that Favreau will utilise similar visual effects technology to create photo-realistic animated animals. Favreau is also attached to *The Jungle Book 2*, but will be putting that on hold to direct *The Lion King*.



## Guy Ritchie in talks to direct live-action *Aladdin*

Director Guy Ritchie is best known for films that take place on the mean streets of London, but he could be journeying to a faraway place where the caravan camels roam. Disney is courting Ritchie to helm its live-action adaptation of *Aladdin*, in the studio's bid to continue its hot streak of live-action versions of its animated classics. The project was originally being developed as a prequel. Screenwriter John August (*Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, *Big Fish*, *Corpse Bride*) has penned the script, which reportedly retains the 1992 cartoon's musical elements. Robin Williams' indelible vocal performance as the Genie, combined with songs by Alan Menken, Howard Ashman and Tim Rice like the Oscar-winning *A Whole New World*, have made *Aladdin* a beloved entry in the Disney Renaissance canon. A Broadway musical based on the film snagged a Best Featured Actor in a Musical Tony Award for James Monroe Iglehart, who plays the Genie.



## Tim Miller leaves *Deadpool 2*

Following the monumental success of *Deadpool*, considerable praise was lavished on director Tim Miller, the visual effects artist and founder of Blur Studios who made his feature directorial debut with *Deadpool*. It seemed that it would be smooth sailing for the sequel, but the production has hit a bump in the road with Miller's departure from *Deadpool 2*. Miller split from the Merc with the Mouth over creative disagreements with star/producer Ryan Reynolds. Reynolds reportedly has significantly more say in the development and production of the sequel. At the time of writing, six actresses including Lizzy Caplan, Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Ruby Rose and Sienna Miller are reportedly being tested for the lead female role of Domino/Neena Thurman. It is speculated that Reynolds and Miller clashed on the casting of Cable/Nathan Summers, whose appearance was promised in the post-credits stinger. *Guardians of the Galaxy* director James Gunn voiced his disappointment at this turn of events on Twitter, saying he was "honestly bummed" that Miller had left the production. *Deadpool 2* is tentatively eyeing a January 2018 release date, pending the selection of a new director.



WALT DISNEY PICTURES  
PRESENTS

# THE LION KING







## Live-action *Mulan* fast-tracked for 2018

As it stands, Disney's 2018 slate is packed. *Wreck-It Ralph 2*, *Gigantic*, *Toy Story 4*, *Ant-Man and the Wasp*, *Black Panther*, *Avengers: Infinity War*, the *Star Wars* Han Solo spin-off and *Mary Poppins Returns* will now be joined by *Mulan*. The tremendous growth in the Chinese film-going market has made *Mulan* a natural candidate for the live-action Disney treatment. The 1998 animated film was inspired by the Chinese legend of Hua Mulan; *The Ballad of Mulan* was first transcribed in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. Lauren Hynek and Elizabeth Martin penned the screenplay, which drew flack because it revolved around a European merchant who falls in love with Mulan. Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver (*Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, *Avatar 2*, *Jurassic World*) have since been hired to rewrite the script, so it is possible that they will adopt a different tack. A global search for a Chinese actress to play the titular heroine is ongoing. In the meantime, Sony is putting together a rival *Mulan* film. Disney's *Mulan* will be released in 3D in November 2018.

## Origins of a scoundrel: Donald Glover is young Lando

After a month or so of whispers that the as-yet untitled *Han Solo* movie had found its Lando, it's now official: Han Solo's long-time frenemy will be played by Donald Glover. Lando Calrissian was originally portrayed by Billy Dee Williams in *Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. "We're so lucky to have an artist as talented as Donald join us," said directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller in a press statement. "These are big shoes to fill, and an even bigger cape, and this one fits him perfectly, which will save us money on alterations. Also, we'd like to publicly apologise to Donald for ruining Comic-Con for him forever." The actor/comedian/rapper is known for his role as Troy in *Community*, and the artist also known as Childish Gambino is a Grammy nominee for his album *Because of the Internet*. He created and stars in the acclaimed comedy series *Atlanta*. Glover will also be in the upcoming *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, joining the growing club of actors who are in both the Marvel Cinematic Universe and the *Star Wars* galaxy. The *Han Solo* spin-off film, starring Alden Ehrenreich in the title role, is set for a 2018 release.



## *Paddington 2* will be a beary star-studded sequel

The loveable talking bear Paddington will return to the big screen with much of the first film's cast returning and some big names joining in. Hugh Grant and Mad-Eye Moody himself, Brendan Gleeson, will be sharing screen time with the digitally-animated, galoshes-clad bear. Hugh Bonneville, Julie Walters, Jim Broadbent, Sally Hawkins, Peter Capaldi, Samuel Joslin and Madeleine Harris are all back, in addition to Ben Whishaw and Imelda Staunton, the voices of Paddington and Aunt Lucy respectively. In a bit of self-parody, Grant will be playing Phoenix Buchanan, a conceited, charming actor whose glory days are now behind him. Gleeson will be playing "Kunckles" McGinty, a street tough safecracker who becomes an unexpected ally to Paddington. *Paddington 2* will toddle adorably into theatres at the end of 2017.



## Willy Wonka prequel being developed

So much happened before Charlie (and those other kids) dropped in. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Grandpa Joe regales Charlie with tales of enigmatic chocolatier Willy Wonka's daring exploits in days gone by. Now, Warner Bros. is planning a prequel to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* which would focus on a young Willy Wonka's adventures, but won't be an origin story *per se*. *Harry Potter* producer David Heyman and *The Secret Life of Pets* writer Simon Rich are attached. Fans of author Roald Dahl and actor Gene Wilder alike are pretty riled up by this, with Wilder's fans seeing this development as an affront to the memory of the recently-deceased actor who played Wonka in the 1971 film. It is unknown if Johnny Depp, who played Wonka in the 2005 film version, will reprise the role, but that seems unlikely if this is about a considerably younger Wonka.



## Pottermore: five *Fantastic Beasts* movies planned

In a move that's reminiscent of the *Hobbit* prequel trilogy which followed the *Lord of the Rings* films, it's been announced that Warner Bros. has its sights set on five movies in the *Fantastic Beasts* and *Where to Find Them* spinoff series. Author J.K. Rowling announced the news to the attendees of a global *Harry Potter* fan event. This is up from the initial plans for a trilogy. Seeing how there are Star Wars and Marvel movies scheduled into the indefinite future, it makes sense that Warner Bros. would want to further sustain the Potterverse. Director David Yates has already begun pre-production on the second *Fantastic Beasts* film, dropping the clue that it will be set in "another global capital city". *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* is set in New York City, but it bears pointing out that the capital of New York state is Albany.

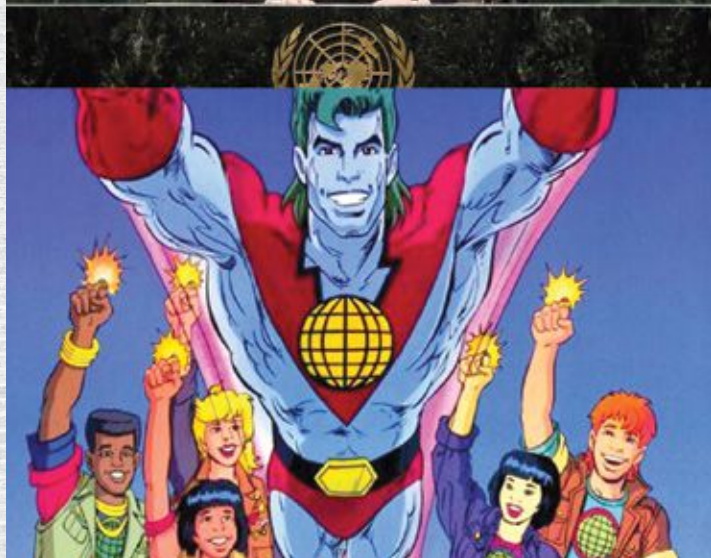


## International Bicycle Film Festival Singapore Holds First Short Film Competition

The International Bicycle Film Festival Singapore (IBFFSG) is now in its second year, with 2016 marking the first IBFFSG short films competition. The pedal culture-centric film festival originated in New York and has since spread to cities including Amsterdam, Milan and Sydney. Steve Liaw and his team at Dirty Blonde Productions won the top honour for the 5-minute-long film *101*, about a young boy haunted by the memory of a serial killer. Liaw took home a custom hand-painted bicycle, the work of master craftsman, artist and classic bike collector/restorer Poon Kng Joo. The panel of judges included Royston Loh, publisher/editor-in-chief of F\*\*\* Magazine, and filmmaker Chai Yee Wei of Mocha Chai Lab. \*SCAPE served as the programme partner and F\*\*\* as the official magazine.





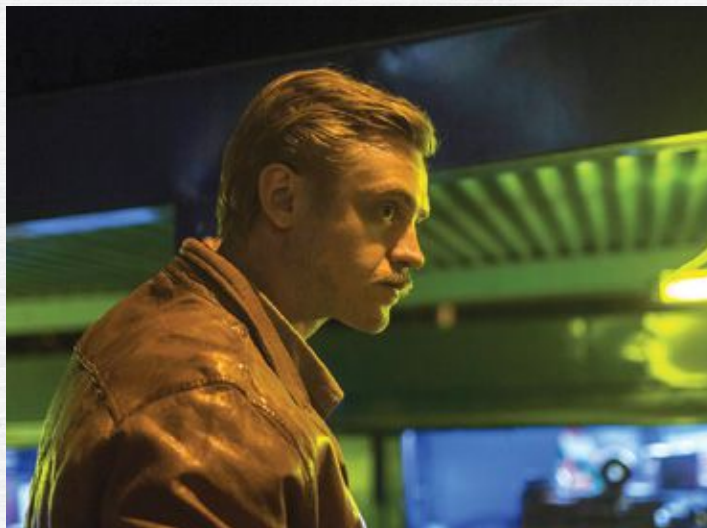


## Leonardo DiCaprio producing *Captain Planet* movie

This one's for the '90s kids. *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*, the cartoon series about five teenagers from across the globe who can summon the blue-skinned eco-warrior superhero Captain Planet, might be headed to the big screen. Leonardo DiCaprio, Oscar-winner and conservation activist, is producing the film through his Appian Way Productions, which is combining powers with Paramount Pictures to get a screenplay into fast development. A *Captain Planet* movie has been mooted for some time, but nothing's come of it – unless you count the Funny or Die short starring Don Cheadle as a foul-mouthed Captain Planet. It's not yet known if DiCaprio will star in the film. We will admit to having a hard time picturing him with the metallic blue skin and fluorescent green mullet, so it's more likely that DiCaprio might play a villain. Glen Powell (*Everybody Wants Some*, *Scream Queens*, *The Expendables 3*) and Jono Matt are being eyed to pen the screenplay.

## Boyd Holbrook replaces Benicio del Toro in *The Predator*

Last month, we reported that Benicio del Toro would be facing off against the Yautja alien, commonly known as the 'Predator', in the upcoming revival of the franchise. Del Toro has dropped out citing "scheduling issues", with *Narcos* star Boyd Holbrook taking his place. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox might see A-list potential in Holbrook, who is playing the primary villain Donald Pierce in the upcoming third *Wolverine* movie *Logan* (see the First Look section). Funnily enough, both Holbrook and del Toro have played characters who've had run-ins with drug cartels. *The Predator*, directed by Shane Black, will be hissing and clicking in February 2018.



## Eddie Redmayne and Tom Hiddleston to voice rivals in *Early Man*

*Early Man*, an animated film from Aardman Studio and director Nick Park (*Wallace and Gromit*, *Shaun the Sheep*) has roped in two prestigious English actors to voice its main characters. The film is set during the nascent days of recorded history, and revolves around the first confrontation between a caveman and a civilised Bronze Age man. Eddie Redmayne will voice the Stone Age caveman hero Dug, who butts heads with Tom Hiddleston's Lord Nooth, an avaricious governor of a Bronze Age town. "Not only is Eddie a joy to work with, his versatility and boundless energy have really helped to bring my new character to life. He embodies the cheeky charm, fun and plucky wit of Dug and I'm sure he'll get along brilliantly with Dug's sidekick Hognob," Park said of Redmayne. Speaking about Hiddleston, Park said: "Tom is a wonderful actor and it's so thrilling to see him bring our comic villain to life with his amazing talent, energy and enthusiasm."



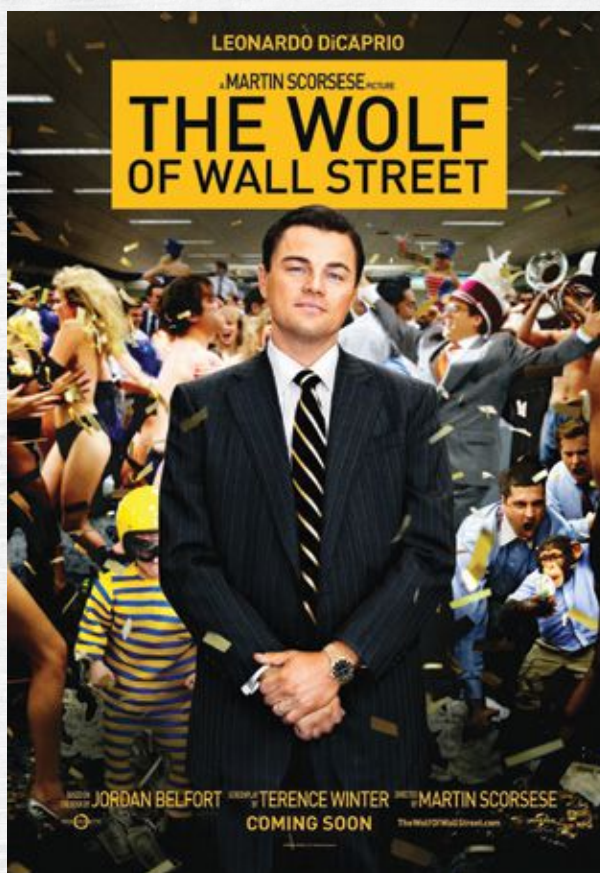


## Jennifer Lawrence and Scarlett Johansson take on duelling Zelda Fitzgerald biopics

The concept of 'duelling movies' is nothing new: we all remember *Armageddon* vs. *Deep Impact*, *Volcano* vs. *Dante's Peak* and *Olympus Has Fallen* vs. *White House Down*. Now, a subject more niche than that of your average blockbuster will be made into two rival films: the life of Jazz-age socialite and writer Zelda Fitzgerald (née Sayre). Zelda was the wife and muse of author F. Scott Fitzgerald. Present-day scholars contend that F. Scott Fitzgerald stole Zelda's ideas, and that her creative endeavours were overlooked by the patriarchal society of the day. Zelda also suffered from schizophrenia. Lawrence will team with fellow Oscar-winner, director Ron Howard, for the film to be simply titled *Zelda*. Johansson's film will be called *The Beautiful and the Damned*, after F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel of the same name, which was based on his relationship with Zelda. The Amazon original series *Z: The Beginning of Everything* stars Christina Ricci as Zelda, and the role has been played by Vanessa Kirby, Allison Pill, Natasha Richardson, Sissy Spacek and Blythe Danner, among others, in movies and TV shows.

## Leonardo DiCaprio called to surrender *Wolf of Wall Street* pay

Transparency International, a Berlin-based non-governmental organisation that aims to combat global corruption, has called for Leonardo DiCaprio to turn over his earnings from *The Wolf of Wall Street*. This comes after it was revealed that the film's producers Riza Aziz and Joey McFarland and DiCaprio's former associate Jho Low have ties to 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB). 1MDB, a strategic development company wholly owned by the government of Malaysia, is at the centre of an ongoing corruption scandal. Low is under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). Aziz is the stepson of Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak.



"If [DiCaprio] knows these are corrupt funds, we would very much like to see him return them," Transparency International's Samantha Grant told *The Hollywood Reporter*. "If that money is found by the DOJ to be corrupt, to not give it back sort of says that money that was due to go to the Malaysian public is sitting in Leonardo DiCaprio's account." DiCaprio said in a statement that he will return "gifts and charitable donations" financed by Aziz, McFarland and Low, but not his salary for *The Wolf of Wall Street*. DiCaprio is estimated to have earned at least \$25 million as the star of the film, plus a fee as producer. He has reportedly been cooperating with law enforcement. Red Granite denies knowledge of receiving illegitimate funding.



# THE GREAT WALL



Acclaimed Chinese director Zhang Yimou makes his English-language debut with this historical fantasy adventure. It is the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, and William Garin (Matt Damon) and Pero Tovar (Pedro Pascal) stumble across the Great Wall of China during their travels. The duo appeals to Emperor Renzong of Song (Wang Junkai) to let them join in a battle defending China from gargantuan monsters; the wall having been built to keep them out. William and Pero stand alongside the fearless Commander Lin Mae (Jing Tian) of the Crane Corps as a colossal battle ensues. The film also stars Andy Lau, Lu Han, Willem Dafoe, Zhang Hanyu, Eddie Peng and Lin Gengxin.

Director Zhang, along with actors Damon, Pascal, Jing and Wang appeared at New York Comic-Con to unveil the film's teaser trailer. The 17-year-old Wang, a member of the boyband TFBoys, was greeted by a throng of female fans brandishing LED signboards. Zhang revealed that not only was there a cast of thousands as is his trademark, the crew was a thousand-strong as well, of which 100 were interpreters.

The casting of Damon as the protagonist in a film set in ancient China, albeit a fantasy film, drew plenty of flack and accusations of whitewashing. Constance Wu, star of the sitcom *Fresh Off the Boat*, was one of the most vocal opponents of this. Damon defended his participation in the film, saying: "Ultimately, where I come down is if people watch the movie and still believe there's whitewashing involved in it, in a creature feature that we made up, then I will listen to it with my whole heart, and I will think about that and I will try to learn from it. I will be surprised if people watch it and have that reaction. I will be genuinely shocked. But it's a perspective as a progressive person I really do agree with and try to listen to and try to be sensitive to." *The Great Wall* rises in late December 2016.









# JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2

The *Baba Yaga* is emerging out from the shadows in the sequel to 2014's action extravaganza *John Wick*. John Wick (Keanu Reeves), the assassin who just can't retire, has returned, with his latest bloody excursion taking him to Rome. The film centres on an artefact known as 'the Marker', which ties directly into a deal that Wick made to leave the hitman business in the first place. He faces off against a fellow assassin played by Common, with Ian McShane, John Leguizamo, Lance Reddick and Bridget Moynahan returning from the first film. New additions to the cast include Ruby Rose, David Patrick Kelly, Peter Stormare and Laurence Fishburne, making this a mini *Matrix* reunion.

"I really liked putting this suit back on, and getting to do what John Wick gets to do," Reeves said during a panel at New York Comic-Con, held at famed venue Madison Square Garden.

"The action, the passion. And the guy who is fighting to be free," he continued. Reeves was joined onstage by Common, McShane, director Chad Stahelski, producer Basil Iwanyk and screenwriter Derek Kolstead. The fans in attendance caught the premiere of the film's teaser trailer, which showcases lots of cool action, classy Italian locales and a new, mean-looking dog to serve as Wick's companion. *John Wick: Chapter 2* strikes in February 2017.





K E A N U R E E V E S

CHAPTER  
**JOHN 2 WICK**

02.10.17

[LIVE! LIVE!]  
LIVE! LIVE!  
LIVE! LIVE!  
LIVE! LIVE!  
LIVE! LIVE!



# LOGAN

Hugh Jackman revealed the title of the third, and apparently final, standalone Wolverine *spin-off*: *Logan*. Jackman posted a photo of him standing on the corner of Bleecker and Lafayette in New York City, with the film's poster draped over a building's façade behind him. Director James Mangold also posted a photo of the second page of the *Logan* screenplay, which, in keeping with the R rating, contains an F-bomb in a line of dialogue.

The film's poster shows a child's hand holding Wolverine's, the latter's claws extended. It stands to reason that said child is X-23 a.k.a Laura Kinney, a clone of Wolverine. X-23 is being played by child actress Sienna Novikov. It has also been revealed that the character played by Boyd Holbrook is the villain Donald Pierce, who in the comics is the leader of a group of cyborg assassins known as the 'Reavers'. *Logan*, based on the *Old Man Logan* story arc in the comics, also sees Patrick Stewart return as Professor X, with Richard E. Grant as mad scientist Dr. Zander Rice and Stephen Merchant as the mutant Caliban. The teaser trailer has shades of *The Last of Us*, and promises an intimate, sombre and emotional farewell to Jackman in the role. Apart from using Johnny Cash's haunting cover of Nine Inch Nails' *Hurt*, Wolverine's look – cowboy in a dress shirt and jacket – seems to be evoking the *Man in Black* too. The Clawed Canuck goes berserker one last time in March 2017.







# LOGAN

IN CINEMAS 2 MARCH



RATINGS BY MPAA



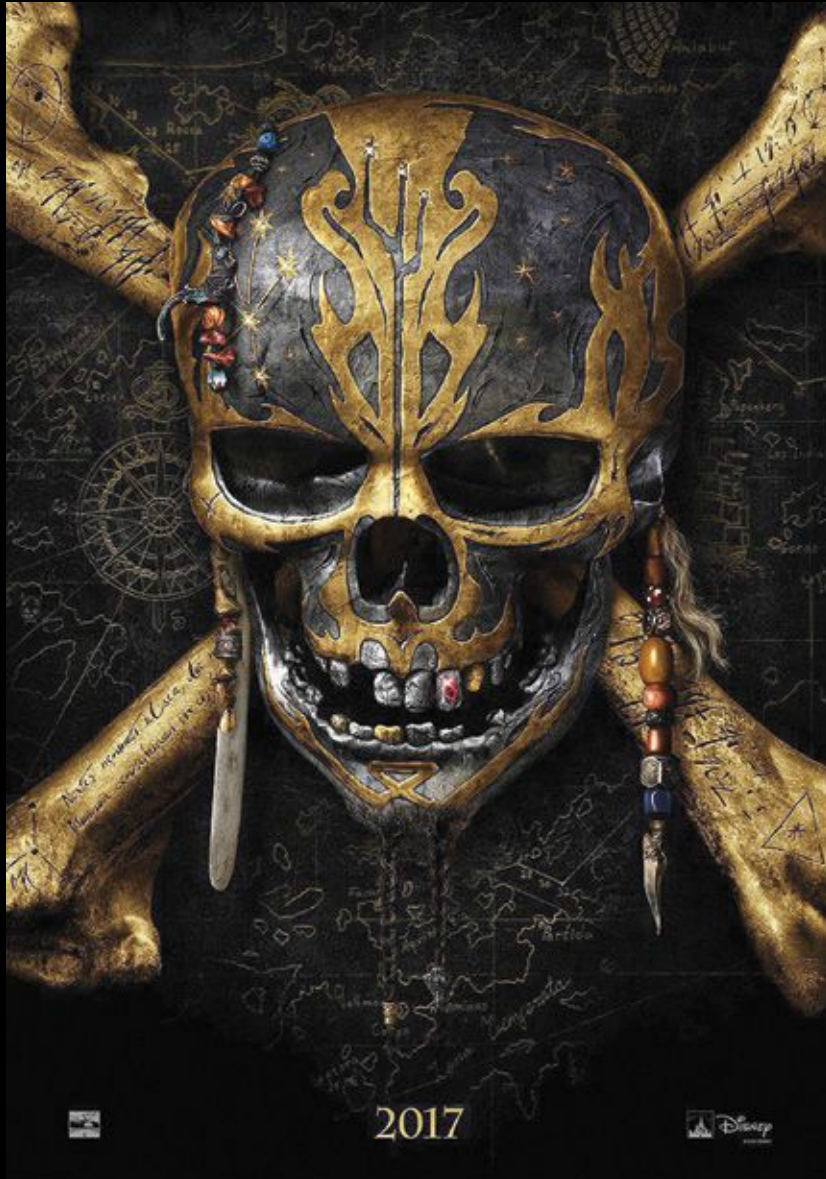


# GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 2

We're in for another cosmically groovy good time. Everyone's favourite band of intergalactic scoundrels is back for the *Guardians of the Galaxy* sequel. Director James Gunn released the film's first teaser trailer to overwhelming excitement. Why yes, baby Groot is looking particularly adorable. Returning from the first film are Chris Pratt as Star-Lord/Peter Quill, Zoe Saldana as Gamora, Dave Bautista as Drax, Bradley Cooper as the voice of Rocket Raccoon, Vin Diesel as the voice of Groot, Karen Gillan as Nebula, Michael Rooker as Yondu and Sean Gunn as Kraglin. New to the cast are Kurt Russell as Ego the Living Planet, Pom Klementieff as Mantis and Elizabeth Debicki as Kismet. The poster has the gang striking a moody, stylish pose, evoking '80s group the Ramones. Marvel's wackiest bunch are headed back to theatres in May 2017.







# PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES



Arrrr you ready for more Captain Jack Sparrow? Johnny Depp's iconic seafaring rogue returns in the fifth instalment of what once was Disney's flagship (heh) live-action franchise. This time, Captain Jack is on the run from a crew of vicious ghost pirates, led by the eerie Captain Salazar (Javier Bardem). When Salazar and his men break out of the Devil's Triangle, they set about exterminating every pirate on the high seas, with Salazar's sights trained on Jack in particular. To survive, Jack must procure the fabled Trident of Poseidon, and in order to find it he must team with the young astronomer Carina Smyth (Kaya Scodelario) and headstrong Royal Navy sailor Henry (Brenton Thwaites). After losing the Black Pearl, Captain Jack is left with the woefully inferior ship aptly named The Dying Gull. Jack and his newfound allies must overcome powerful forces in the hopes of regaining the glory that once was his.

Returning to the series are Geoffrey Rush as Jack's long-time frenemy Captain Barbossa, Kevin McNally as Jack's first mate Joshamee Gibbs, Keith Richards as Jack's father Captain Teague and Orlando Bloom as Will Turner, the current Davy Jones. Norwegian directors Joachim Rønning and Espen Sandberg, who helmed the Oscar-nominated adventure biopic *Kon-Tiki*, are captaining this outing in the franchise, which will set sail in May 2017.









\*\*\*

WTF

WE TALK FILMS

**ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY**

Felicity Jones Leads The Pack In The Biggest Spin-Off  
Movie Ever

**FANTASTIC BEASTS & WHERE TO FIND THEM**

Colin Farrell On His Erm, Wand Skills

**NOCTURNAL ANIMALS**

Aaron Taylor-Johnson's A Charismatic Psychopath

**SGIFF 2016**

12 DAYS, 161 FILMS

**TOP 10**

Women On Top

**And More...**

**ASSASSIN'S CREED**

F\*\*\* swings by the set of the first live-action feature film adaptation of the blockbusting video-game







# NIGHT OWL

Aaron Taylor-Johnson goes through a complete transformation  
for his role as Ray Marcus in *Nocturnal Animals*



**For Aaron Taylor-Johnson, taking a leading role in Tom Ford's eagerly-awaited new film, *Nocturnal Animals*, was a step into the unknown – playing a dangerous charismatic psychopath was, he says, way outside of his comfort zone.**



It was a huge challenge, and he clearly relished every minute of it. "I'm grateful that Tom thought of me, and gave me the opportunity to do this, because those are the excitements that you get as an actor, to really challenge what's not in your comfort zone, and to have a filmmaker who would take you there, would take you on that journey."

*Nocturnal Animals*, which won the Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival where it premiered to universally glowing reviews, stars Amy Adams as Susan, an art gallery owner trapped in a failing marriage with Hutton (Armie Hammer).

Out of the blue, a manuscript for a novel written by her first husband, Edward (Jake Gyllenhaal), arrives at her home. She hasn't seen Edward for years since she left him, heartbroken, for Hutton. Edward has dedicated the book, called *Nocturnal Animals*, to her and written a note suggesting that they might meet up once she has read it.

As Susan begins to read the novel – a terrifying tale of a family terrorised by thugs as they drive across a desert road in Texas late at night – she imagines Edward as Tony Hastings, the central character, and Ford brings us a story within a story.

Taylor-Johnson plays Ray, one of a trio of joyriders who force Hastings, his wife (Isla Fisher) and their daughter off the road and kidnaps the women.

"Ray is not only a fictional character, but he's a part of another character; - Susan's imagination. He's that fear that we all have that something can suddenly, out of nowhere, come along and

destroy everything," says Taylor-Johnson.

"He's chaos – he's this force of nature that is unpredictable. Ray is charming, charismatic, but ultimately dangerous. He will take whatever he wants, and that is something that Tony doesn't understand yet."

As she reads, Susan realises that the novel is, on one level, a gripping noir thriller, an exploration of violence and masculinity, and on another is a stark message to her detailing the devastation that she caused when she broke up with Edward.

In the film, Ford dovetails the different elements of the story – how Edward and Susan met, fell in love and finally broke up – with the thriller unfolding as Susan reads it.

Taylor-Johnson prepared thoroughly before filming started. "I researched characters who were similar (to Ray) such as Jeffrey Dahmer and Ted Bundy, and read books like *Killers on the Road* by James Ellroy."

"These are psychopaths – they have no empathy behind their eyes, and totally believe what they're doing is humane. The psychology of that, the charismatic, magnetic pull that these kinds of guys can have is a very frightening aspect."

At the end of filming he admits that he needed some time to detox – to shake off the character.

"After a movie is finished, it's like a three-month period in which you're sort of shedding off that character," he says. "It's almost like I'd just been through the trenches – it's a traumatic experience and that trauma is kind of delicate and fragile."

Taylor-Johnson was born in Buckinghamshire, England and now lives in Los Angeles with his wife, director Sam Taylor-Johnson, and their children. His films include *Nowhere Boy*, *Kick-Ass*, *Chatroom*, *Savages*, *Anna Karenina*, *Kick-Ass 2*, *Godzilla* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*.

Here, he spills all about working with Tom Ford, playing a psychopath and why he doesn't take on back-to-back acting jobs.

**What was your first reaction when you read the script? What did you think about playing this guy?**

My first reaction to the character was that I couldn't kind of comprehend what angle I could come at. It really was something I'd never encountered before or really been asked to play – I mean, I'm grateful that Tom [Ford, director] thought of me, and gave me the opportunity to do this, because those are the excitements that you get as an actor, to really challenge what's not in your comfort zone, and to have a filmmaker who would take you there, would take you on that journey. That's exactly what he did. I had a lot of questions, a lot of concerns, and really, a lot of self-doubt – I didn't have much confidence until I sat down with Tom. He really educated me and expressed what he wanted. When we started to create and collaborate, I realised I could let go and put my trust in his hands. That was thrilling and exciting. That's kind of how it came about, but as a whole, the script was just this look back at a relationship and regret, portrayed through this story in a way that was extremely original, complex, ambitious and just unique. Seeing that love story unravel back to front was just really eloquent and interesting.









#### Have you read the novel?

I did, and I made the mistake of telling Tom that I was reading it at the time – I was halfway through and he told me to stop. Usually I'd continue reading but I asked him why, and he said, 'because it's so much more than that now.' If I had read the drafts way back then, sure, but at that point it had already grown into something that was more personal to him and more unique. I respect that, because ultimately it's his vision, and I want to be on the director's page. So it was hard to, because I was intrigued to see, you know, if there was something I could pick out, but he said, 'specifically for you, for Ray.' He transformed him and made him into something different. There's something he wanted visually, so I wanted to be on that journey with him, and create what he wanted – there's no point if you don't have someone's back when they're doing something.

#### So you got a strong impression that this film is very much Tom's story and vision?

Absolutely. I see him not only as a director – I do see him as a filmmaker. He found this material, worked on it and adapted it to a screenplay. He's all in. That passion drives everything. That becomes the centre point, and everyone is sort of magnetically pulled to that kind of person. That's a true director.

#### Can you set up your character a little bit for us?

Ray is not only a fictional character, but he's a part of another character, Susan's imagination. He's that fear that we all have that something can suddenly, out of nowhere, come along and destroy everything. He's chaos – he's this force of nature that is unpredictable. Ray is charming,

charismatic, but ultimately dangerous. He will take whatever he wants, and that is something that Tony doesn't understand yet. I think that was the genius behind Tom – it's the uncertainty that's really the scariness behind it. It's interesting that when people think of villainous people, they're brutish or they're tough, physically. To be psychologically manipulating, cleverly charming is a whole new way, for me, to come to that kind of character. Tom knew exactly what he wanted – he was very precise and detailed, and was able to take me there.

#### How did you prepare in terms of your research? Were there things that you did, away from the script?

Absolutely. I researched characters who were similar, such as Jeffrey Dahmer and Ted Bundy, and read books like *Killers on the Road* by James Ellroy. These are psychopaths – they have no empathy behind their eyes, and totally believe what they're doing is humane. The psychology of that, the charismatic, magnetic pull that these kinds of guys can have is a very frightening aspect. There was an HBO documentary at the time called *The Jinx* that was extraordinary to watch, and to kind of grab the mannerisms of these characters.

You know, also, Tom set the book in West Texas, and wanted my character to be in that redneck area, so tonally I have a place, somewhere I can be, where I hang out. I was in Marfa and spent some time there, picked up some things: the cigarettes that they smoke, their physicality.

#### Did you work extensively with Tom to try and get the character right?

The way Tom plays with the character, and how I kind of work also, is that sometimes you

have to deal with the aesthetic first – what the character looks like, and then go deeper, start on the outside and go in. Miraculously, you've got to do it at the same time as you're playing it. What's clever about Tom was I think he needed a new image for me. I think that's what Tom is really great at as well: taking an actor and pulling them out of their comfort zone, then creating something that you've never seen before. He straightened my hair and had me grow a beard – and he personally shaved the mutton-chops in. I love how connected we were, and to have someone else do it – it was very hands-on. I literally was play-doh in his hands, but I liked that.

I like to explore, and to have a director who is really interested in what the character looks like and not be afraid to make me look gritty or do something, like by adding a bruise or a ring. It's the details! He has an eye for detail. You can obviously tell that in his fashion world, and in the aesthetic of his movies, but it goes deeper than that, it really does – there's so much more behind everything. For actors, it's a lot of fun to play with backstories. He makes it about each role. What's great and interesting is you can tell that he loves each character, individually, in their own way with no judgment, even loving people for what they're not good at.

#### Even Ray?

Even Ray! Because as much as you really detest him and you want him to get what he deserves, there's a part of you that is pulled to him or loves his outgoing-ness, or something. Maybe it's just that much – even to a point where I think that Tony, Jake [Gyllenhaal]'s character in the book, looks at him and goes, 'Huh, I want to be that guy. Why aren't I that guy? How did I just let that happen?' It's all in regret in the back of the





mind, like losing dignity. It plays on and taps into all those fears. There's a lot of texture to it, a lot of complexities that you wouldn't necessarily see the first time around, which is why it's an interesting film just to study, in a way. I think people might expect that with Tom everything's just on the surface, but it's not. It goes layers and layers and layers deep.

**Do you think Ray represents a kind of extreme, heightened masculinity that contrasts the way that Tony doesn't act in the way that he hopes he would?**

Well he doesn't act in the way that we would all hope we would, which is I think what's amazing to see. I know for Jake, that was a real hard thing to stop himself from, in those moments, because it was my job to push him to the brink, push his buttons, really manipulate him psychologically, and get reactions out of him – make him feel vulnerable and insecure. That was challenging.

**He seems like he would be a disturbing character to play. Did you try to stay in character pretty constantly, especially in maintaining the accent?**

Yes – I probably did spend the majority of the time in that accent. I would say I was seventy per cent immersed in that world at least, and it goes deep. After a movie is finished, it's like a three-month period in which you're sort of shedding off that character. It's almost like I'd just been through the trenches – it's a traumatic experience and that trauma is kind of delicate and fragile. It takes time to re-immersing myself into the world and have a support structure that gives me grounding. It's an art form, and I think if I've done my job right, then my emotional, internal being is shot to bits in a way. You've just put a lot of strain on your physical body

without knowing it. It's the reason why I don't do jobs back-to-back, because I know that that's actually quite an essential part of recharging and understanding what's next.

**But do you enjoy taking on roles like that?**

I love it! It's kind of all I know. It's therapeutic in a way – it's an interesting way to explore people and psychology, to interact in this way. It's like a feeling, like living on the edge, and it's scary. It's hard to explain. There are other movies I've done in which it really didn't have to be taken all that seriously, but it's all on the surface. It can be fun and enjoyable, but when you take a character and really study it and want to create that, then it's almost like changing the DNA in your body. You take something from it. I don't know what it is, because it can be something that you look back on and kind of go, "Huh. There's a reason why I did that then" or, "That was interesting because that was art imitating life in a certain way" – not in this character specifically, but you always take something. I enjoy it when it's things like this, because experiences are what last longer than the film.

The film can go on for years and years, but what I remember is the intimacy that we all had together – Tom, Jake, on certain nights and those scenes. We went to a heightened level where we were well out of our comfort zone, where we just felt free to explore and play. It was incredible.

**Tom is a self-professed perfectionist and we talked about his attention to detail. Do you think that makes for a good director?**

Yeah, I think so, absolutely. I think most people I know in our craft are perfectionists, and want

to just nail every little angle, every little beat and every detail. To have someone who's willing to do just that, to be on that, to be as obsessive, to be decisive, and give you the boundaries to work within – I think that's everything. It's remarkable how he does it. That's what makes him a great director.

**Some actors say they don't enjoy watching themselves on screen. How was this one to watch for you?**

The first time I saw this I had like, mild panic and anxiety. I think it is unnatural to see yourself, and I do find it difficult. Most of the time when I watch I'm being self-critical about each point, and I'm pretty sure that's what every actor does. It's like, "Okay, did that come across?"

In this circumstance, I didn't actually recognise myself, which was bizarre and shocking, and I think that's what made me feel anxious, unsettled, and confused. I was thinking, 'I can't remember saying those things.' Just having that initial reaction internally was a real revelation – I've never felt that, and it's extraordinary. That was my first time seeing it, and the second time I was just wrapped up and immersed in Amy [Adams] and Jake's story. I think they're exceptional – feeling that relationship, seeing how it came together, and how it easily just fell apart. How she's looking back, and that essence of realising what you have – you've got to take care of what you have. One of my favourite scenes in the movie is Amy and her mother at the dinner table. I think it's one of the most beautifully-written scenes of dialogue. It kind of made me brush past that before but it's extraordinary that Tom had put this whole thing together. He knows what he's doing.

*Nocturnal Animals* opens on 1 December 2016.



# THE **ASSASSINS** ARE COMING!

*Assassin's Creed* makes the leap from video game to the big screen, with a stellar cast, a talented director and realistic stunts that will blow you away

By Joe Utichi

Photoshoot of Michael Fassbender by John Russo







**A lone eagle soars over an expanse of desert in Almería, Southern Spain. On the ground beneath it, a convoy of 15th Century carriages thunder down a dusty road. Towards the rear of the carriages, two hooded figures navigate their way forward, taking out the drivers one by one, in as silent and efficient a way as possible.**



This is the set of *Assassin's Creed*, the first live-action feature film adaptation of the blockbusting video-game series of the same name, published by ubisoft. And no expense has been spared in the pursuit of delivering epic action to cinema audiences.

For anyone who's played one of these games, in which players command a highly-skilled silent Assassin through numerous periods of world history, Free-running across rooftops and executing threats to humanity with hidden blades concealed in their bracers, the set of *Assassin's Creed* will feel instantly familiar.

And what's most remarkable about the events being captured today is how smoothly the production has come together. First released in 2007, there has been a major *Assassin's Creed* game published annually ever since, as well as a string of spin-offs. In fact, it has become one of the flagship video-game franchises in the world, selling more than 96 million copies worldwide. From the moment the series released its first teaser trailer, fans have been crying out for a feature film to realise the vision of the games for real.

## Getting The Big-Screen Treatment

It was five years ago that the Ubisoft Motion Pictures team and Jean de Rivieres met with Ubisoft's Yves Guillemot to discuss the potential of *Assassin's Creed* for big-screen treatment. It was essential, Guillemot insisted, that the DNA of the games be respected in any attempt to translate them to another medium. And that meant finding the right actor to play the lead Assassin in a film.

"Even before talking to potential screenwriters and studio partners, we felt we needed an iconic actor to play our assassin," notes de Riveres.

"Michael Fassbender was the obvious choice, he brought both mainstream success and an independent touch to the project. We only went to Michael, no other actor was ever up for the role."

Fassbender, well known to audiences for roles in films like *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* and *Steve Jobs*, responded immediately to the central *Assassin's Creed* notion, that through technology we can tap the genetic memories of our ancestors and relive their experiences across history. "The idea that we hold in us the experiences, mistakes and memories of our ancestors was really fascinating," notes Fassbender. "I thought it was a really cool scientific theory that seemed very plausible."

On set today, Fassbender is playing Aguilar de Nerha, an Assassin who lived in Spain during the Spanish Inquisition that began in 1478. But for much of the movie, he plays a modern-day character, Callum Lynch. Cal is a Death Row convict who is spared the lethal injection by a company, Abstergo, that offers him a chance to experience the life of his ancestor using a machine called the Animus that taps into his genetic memory.

"It feels like two different movies in a way," notes Fassbender, of this switching between two time periods and two characters. "Aguilar is definitely part of a family, and he believes in the Creed. Cal is somebody who's much more of a drifter, having been in and out of correctional facilities for most of his life. He doesn't believe in much."

## A Director With A Vision

Finding a director with vision enough to realise both of these time periods was a big challenge. In the end, it was Fassbender who suggested a director he'd been working with on a feature film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: Justin Kurzel. "Justin just has incredibly good taste,"

notes Fassbender. "He's got a good feel for material and he's strong and bold in his choices. There's a lot at stake in this movie, and that comes across with Justin."

Kurzel has an artistic background, and was feted for his work on *Macbeth*, as well as his previous film, *Snowtown*. But he had never attempted a film of the scale of *Assassin's Creed*. He shared Fassbender's interest in the notion of genetic memory. "I've always been interested in genetics and DNA," Kurzel explains. "I think that's a fascinating part of the games, and the original script."

The director immediately sensed a responsibility to go the extra mile in establishing the franchise as suitable for big-screen adaptation. It wouldn't be good enough simply to simulate the action of *Assassin's Creed* with visual effects – if it was going to stand out from the games, it had to be done for real. "So many of the fight sequences and stunts are performed by the actors and real stunt people," he says. "I could have shot it all on a parking lot and made it very CGI-heavy, but I thought what was really interesting was how we could make the audience feel as though it were possible; that Assassins in real life can jump between buildings."

Hence the extreme action being captured on set today, just a slice of several months of work that has gone into principal photography on the movie. Damien Walters, the stunt performer atop a crane 120ft in the air, filming the 'Leap of Faith', an iconic stunt from the games, is facing the biggest challenge of his career. He's understandably nervous – "anyone can drop from 120ft," he jokes, "it's just how you walk after it," – but excited; in fact, as a fan of the games, he'd been planning to attempt a Leap of Faith just for the pleasure of it.

## A Stand-Alone Movie









There's something special about the games that inspires that kind of passion, possibly related to the enormous attention to detail developers have invested in realising the historical time periods that the series has visited. Players have been able to navigate Jerusalem during the Crusades, Florence during the Renaissance, and London during the Industrial Revolution period, amongst many others.

But for the feature film, it was important to offer something new. "Our approach from the beginning was to make a stand-alone movie and therefore, not to use any of the existing Assassins or main characters from the game" says de Rivieres. "We also felt it was important to expand upon the existing universe and give these fans, who have spent hours immersed in these games, something new."

Picking the Spanish Inquisition as a backdrop fit the overriding theme of the series. "Part of the core DNA of Assassin's Creed is to immerse people in important historical settings and eras. The Inquisition was a period linked to religious freedom and an iconic moment in history that still resonates with us today. We were also able to integrate real historical figures, such as Tomás de Torquemada, into the storyline, which is another key component of the brand."

The Spanish regressions featured in the film put Aguilar at the centre of events like the Auto-da-fé and the siege of Granada. Notes veteran producer Frank Marshall (*Jurassic World*, *Indiana Jones*, *The Bourne Identity*): "Granada at the time was the last Muslim stronghold in Spain, while most of the rest of the country had returned to Christianity. That city, and its conquest, is a key part of the movie."

The production was assisted by a team at Ubisoft who specialises in researching the history that comes through the games. The events are real. The only embellishment is the notion of two groups that operate in the

shadows – the Assassins and their bitter rivals, the Templars – who orchestrate events that will change the balance of power. And, in fact, even these two groups, though heavily fictionalised in the *Assassin's Creed* canon, have roots in actual history.

"There's this kind of ambiguity to the moral compasses of being an Assassin and being a Templar," says Kurzel. "The Templars believe in benign control, whereas the Assassins are obviously all about free will. These are two opposing extremes."

## A Key Theme

The purpose of Cal's regressions – he is told – is to help Abstergo discover the root cause of violence. In fact, Abstergo is a cover for the modern-day Templar movement, and it is using Cal's Assassin genealogy to track down the answers to secrets lost to the past. This, again, is a key theme of the games, but while they focus on the regressions, the film spends much more time in the modern era.

"It was important to the development to bring something new to *Assassin's Creed* for the feature film," notes de Rivieres, "The story, the characters and the setting were crafted specifically for the big screen. This gave us an opportunity to take that storyline further, go deeper into the world of the modern Templars and Abstergo, so fans will discover more about the world of *Assassins Creed* when they see the film in theatres."

It falls to another *Macbeth* collaborator to bring Fassbender's character into the Abstergo facility. Academy Award® winner Marion Cotillard, who played Lady Macbeth in the Kurzel film, re-joins her co-star and director to play Sofia Rikken, a well-meaning scientist at the Abstergo facility who helps Cal through his regressions. She's the daughter of Alan Rikken (played by Academy

Award® winner Jeremy Irons), who is Templar through and through, and is using his daughter's grasp of complex science to manipulate her motives.

"She has this ideology which is a very strong desire to understand violence," notes Cotillard. "Everything in her life is dedicated to finding this, but she'll discover that her father has another agenda."

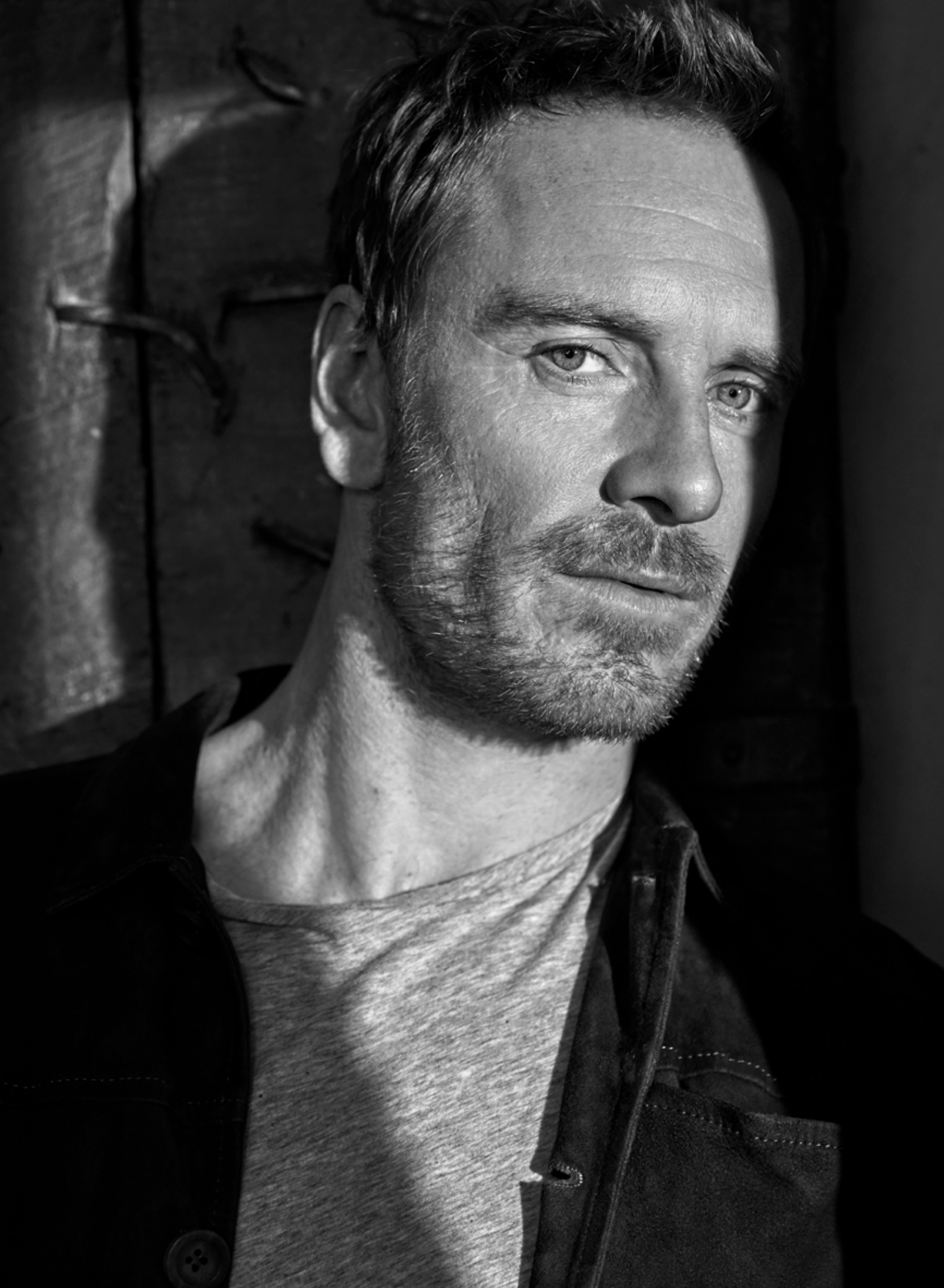
Reuniting the team that had been responsible for such a critical success was immediately appealing to Cotillard. "I had such an amazing experience with Justin and Michael on *Macbeth*," she notes. "Even before I read it, I wanted to work with them again. And I really loved this character. I wanted to make Sofia live, and my focus was to create who she would be on screen."

While familiar with Assassin's Creed as a brand, none of the key cast would profess to proficiency with the *Assassin's Creed* games, but, notes de Rivieres, this is no pre-requisite to realising the themes in a new medium. "Everyone we spoke to immediately fell in love with the world of *Assassin's Creed*," said de Rivieres, "Let's be honest, video games have always proved tricky to adapt into cinema, which is why it was so important to us to bring in the right talent and creative team from the film industry to create a successful cinematic experience, while working closely with the brand and developers to make sure we retained the essence of what makes the world of *Assassin's Creed* so special."

On set, Fassbender lifts his hood over his head and, immediately, the iconic silhouette of a Master Assassin confirms the familiarity gamers will feel when *Assassin's Creed* opens. "When you put on the uniform of the character, it gives you that extra element," he notes.

*Assassin's Creed* opens on 22 December 2016.









# INTRODUCING **ASSASSIN'S CREED**

All the characters and terms you need to know  
before you watch the upcoming movie

By Joe Utichi



When Callum Lynch arrives at the Abstergo facility in the opening scenes of Justin Kurzel's *Assassin's Creed* movie, he's introduced to a world he didn't know existed. The Assassin Brotherhood and the Templar Order have been at war for as long as history can remember, each group with their own ideals and beliefs for how mankind can reach its greatest potential and trying to trace artefacts of a precursor civilisation that was wiped out before the first humans walked the Earth. Through the Animus, the Templars hope to tap into genetic memories, sending individuals back through history to relive the experiences of their ancestors. But what does it all mean? For a newcomer to the world of *Assassin's Creed*, here's a primer to get you up to speed.

## THE ASSASSIN BROTHERHOOD

The Assassin Brotherhood trace their roots back to the dawn of Age. A secret sect of silent warriors, the Assassins have three key rules:

- i. Stay your blade from the flesh of the innocent.
- ii. Hide in plain sight.
- iii. Never compromise the Brotherhood.

It's through these Three Tenets that the Assassins have operated over the centuries and waged a clandestine war against the Templar Order. An Assassin must show restraint and take lives only when necessary; an Assassin must show subtlety and blend with the crowd; an Assassin must show integrity and never bring harm to the Brotherhood.

It's through these tenets that they distinguish themselves from the Knights Templar, who value control over free will. Assassins believe in free will, and recognise the inherent contradiction their Creed causes to that end. They take their inspiration from the Eagle, surveying cities from high vantage points, scaling rooftops and taking the lives of their enemies with hidden blades.

## THE TEMPLAR ORDER

With a similarly expansive history, The Templar Order have long desired to be the puppet masters of history. Believed to have existed since the dawn of humanity, the Templars and the Assassins once shared the same beliefs and ideals for society, but over time their enmity has seen them wage a war that has lasted a millennium. Both factions believe in a better future for humanity, but the Templars are wont to achieve their ends with the pursuit of power and wealth, corrupting governments and bending religion to their own ends. They have been responsible for the greatest conflicts in Earth's history, everything from the Crusades to the Cold War.

## ABSTERGO

As the 20<sup>th</sup> Century dawned, and the power of religion – which had proved such a useful pawn in the Templar game – waned, so the Templar Order sought to wage technological war

through the application of science. Believing progress would grant them the control they so desired, they invested heavily in breakthroughs that they applied to their own ends, through a mega-corporation with tentacles in many different industries, called Abstergo. By the time of the events of Justin Kurzel's *Assassin's Creed* movie, Abstergo believes it is on the cusp of a breakthrough, but to reach the answers they seek, they must draw on the knowledge and experience of the Assassin Brotherhood – by force if necessary.

## CALLUM LYNCH

It's in Callum Lynch (played by Michael Fassbender) that Abstergo believes it will finally achieve its goal. Under the direction of her father, Alan Rikken (Jeremy Irons), a promising young scientist at Abstergo, Dr. Sofia Rikken (Marion Cotillard), arranges for Lynch's release from Death Row, where he is being held for murder. A troubled man, who witnessed his mother's death at his father's hand when he was just a boy, Lynch is lost and struggling to understand his place in the world. Sofia promises to answer his questions, if only he'll take part in her experiments with a device known as the Animus.

## THE ANIMUS

The most iconic of Abstergo's scientific developments is a machine that unlocks the genetic memories held in a subject's DNA, allowing them to regress to and experience the memories of ancestors thought long lost to history. It's a complicated and fraught procedure, requiring full ego-integrity (read: sanity) from its participants, and synchronisation is maintained on a knife's edge. Extreme events and emotional responses can cause synchronisation to waver, and full de-synchronisation can have devastating effects on a subject's psyche. The eventual end result of prolonged exposure to the Animus is 'splitting', or the complete loss of mental faculties and irreversible damage to the memories contained within. Unfortunately, there's no simple way to page directly to the most relevant memories in a subject's psyche, and much can happen on the road to the answers being sought.

## THE BLEEDING EFFECT

Prolonged exposure to the Animus can result in the latent imagery of their ancestors' memories presenting themselves even when they are not in the Animus. It presents through extreme hallucinations, nightmares, nausea and pain, and effects intensify as exposure to the Animus increases.

## 15th CENTURY SPAIN & THE SPANISH INQUISITION

It's through the Animus that Cal relives the memories of his ancestor, Aguilar de Nehar, who lived in 15<sup>th</sup> Century Spain and fought against the might of the Spanish Inquisition,

and its grand inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada. It's through Aguilar's memories that Lynch discovers he is part of the Assassin Brotherhood, but in a country torn apart by a violent attempt to maintain the Catholic orthodoxy, Aguilar poses a real threat, particularly when it is revealed that Torquemada is a Templar, manipulating the Inquisition for his own ends.

## AGUILAR DE NEHAR

Aguilar is one of Callum's ancestors. One of his first visions of Aguilar comes at his initiation ceremony into the Brotherhood. We watch as he makes his pledge to uphold the Three Tenets and as his ring finger is severed, the final sacrifice to become a Master Assassin, necessary for use of the hidden blade. From there, Cal follows Aguilar through subsequent regressions as the Master Assassin attempts to stem the blood spilled by the Templars, and uncover their plot to seek the 'Artefact'.

## THE HIDDEN BLADE

A compact and deadly device that has become the hallmark of the Assassin Brotherhood, the hidden blade is a bracer concealing a piercing dagger, that can be extended and retracted by the wearer in a flash, just long enough to take out an opponent and hide all evidence that points to the Assassin bearing it. It requires the removal of the Assassin's ring finger to operate properly, but while the blade is retracted it is nigh on undetectable, the perfect weapon for an order that believes in secrecy and hiding in plain sight above all things.

## THE ARTEFACT

A mysterious piece of precursor technology, Rikken believes learning its whereabouts will grant the Templars power over the Assassins – and all of humanity. It's his true motivation for putting Cal through the Animus program, even as his daughter believes she is there to do some good. It is believed that Aguilar was the last known person to handle the Artefact. If they can find out, through Cal's regressions, where he hid it, they need only recover it themselves in the present day.

## THE LEAP OF FAITH

Of all of the Assassin's physical skills, learnt through years of training and focussing on Freerunning, a type of movement only revealed publicly in the 1980s, the Leap of Faith is perhaps their greatest feat. It allows them to escape from danger and navigate the verticality of a life lived on rooftops. Demonstrating their adherence to their core beliefs that an Assassin's life was worth only as much as it served the Brotherhood, the Leap of Faith was the final test to initiate Assassins before they could take their oaths to the Brotherhood.





# A BEAST OF A MAN

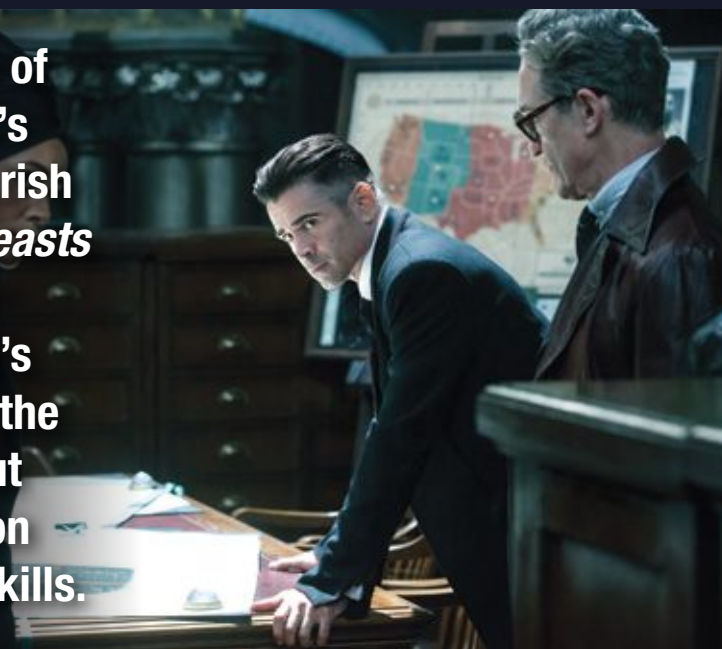
Colin Farrell waves his wand and protects the wizards,  
as the Director of Magical Security in  
*Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*







**Colin Farrell has seen his fair share of ups and downs in his career but he's definitely on the up right now. The Irish actor currently stars in *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*, a fantasy action film inspired by J.K. Rowling's book of the same name (she wrote the screenplay too). Here, he talks about his exposure to wizardry, working on amazing sets, and his, erm, wand skills.**



**How much exposure had you had to *Harry Potter* and J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World prior to becoming involved in this film?**

I hadn't read the books but I've seen all the films based on the *Harry Potter* series, and loved every single one of them. I have such appreciation for the importance of cinema, and of films that provoke and have a social conscience or awareness; I also have a great appreciation for films that are true escapism. That's not to sell short what the *Harry Potter* series reached for as well, to encapsulate the importance of friendship, growth, and the turning in a life from a boy or a girl to a man or a woman. But the escapism that's inherent and such a fundamental part of these films and the books, of course, was something that I was just so enamored by from the first time I saw the first film all those years ago. So, when I heard that they were doing another one and that J.K. Rowling had written the script ... yeah, I was excited to be a part of this universe.

**When you first read J.K. Rowling's screenplay for *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, was it those elements that drew you in?**

No, really, because the characters are all so finely drawn and the world itself is New York, albeit a New York of a bygone era, 1926. It's a New York that is not familiar to me experientially but is familiar to me from film. Yet she tilts the perspective a little bit by imbuing it with this sense of magic and MACUSA [the Magical Congress of the USA], this Federation of Wizards, and all those things that she brought into the script that were to do with magic and to do with grounding magic in some kind of realism. That magic could co-exist within a world that's very recognisable, but still be hidden in the shadows, was, I thought, extraordinary.

**What can you tell us about Percival Graves and how you found your way into this character?**

Percival Graves is a very high-ranking official at MACUSA, the Director of Magical Security. The modern day equivalent, I suppose, would be similar to the head of the FBI, though it's not precisely the equivalent. His job, essentially, has to do with protecting the population of wizards in North America. He's someone who spends time overseeing a really big group of fellow Aurors, or fellow investigators, and investigating anything that goes on within the wizarding world – crimes against wizards, or if wizards commit crimes against the world of No-Majs [American term for Muggle]. He's also someone who has true ability and has evolved over years of studying and researching and practice into something of a powerful wizard. It was all there on the page, and I spoke to [director] David Yates in great detail about the character and what he felt the tone of Graves would be. So, it was just a case of undertaking what J.K. had written and running with it, which was an interesting adventure to go on.

**How did you find working with director David Yates, and what kind of balance do you think he brings to the movie in terms of the character work and the practical demands of orchestrating a production on this scale?**

Great. He's so emotionally articulate, so specific, and so detail-oriented – whether it's to do with the design of the film aesthetically or the characters' journeys – how each character interacts and the relationships that grow or those that dissolve, whatever it may be. He's just incredibly, incredibly astute, really clear and specific, and fun as well.

He's always open for the truth in moments. Time and time again, he said, 'Okay, forget that you're a wizard; forget all the *Harry Potter* stuff', because he wants to get into the reality of it, and what essentially will be relatable to boys and girls and men and women who are watching the film, which are the human interactions. If that doesn't work, well, then all the bells and whistles in the world don't really count for what they could if they were supported by an emotionally-grounded story.

**What was it like working on the amazing sets created by production designer Stuart Craig and the art department for the film?**

It was amazing. The sets were incredible. I've been doing this for a while now and I've seen some really extraordinary craftsmanship. If this doesn't surpass the magnificence of the sets that I've seen, it's right up there. Just the level of detail ... all of this stuff was designed and painstakingly crafted and painted and honed, and some of it will never be seen in the film. You'd go into the corner of a set and you'd find books and lamps and trinkets that will never be shot, but were all within the logic of this world that was created.

And the sets do a lot of the work for us as actors. You walk in and you're inhabiting a space that's very unusual, very exotic, and it does something to you. It informs you; it affects your mood.

**Looking back on the experience, do you have a favourite scene to play or a moment on set that was particularly memorable?**

Oh, I loved some of the wand stuff, and the action sequences were great, but the character work is the most fun for me. It's just hard to beat a well-written scene with just two actors facing each other, figuring out the scene and going off each other – one leading, one following, and that becomes inverted – it never gets more fun than that.

**Did you do any training to work out Graves's wand technique?**

Not really, no. I just let it loose. [laughs]

**What do you hope audiences will experience when they go to see *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* in the cinema?**

Just to be entertained and transported. If they're fully involved and invested in this world for the two hours of running time, well, then everyone's done what we set out to do.







# A KIND OF **MAGIC**

Katherine Waterston joins J.K. Rowling's Wizarding World  
as Tina Goldstein in  
*Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*









**Katherine Waterston – remember this name. As part of a whole new era of actors in J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World, Waterston is on the edge of celebrity-style magic, as one of the main characters in *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*.**



Here, she shares her reactions to being part of this magical world, what it was like having so many scenes with Eddie Redmayne, and why her whole family is so thrilled for her.

**How did you react when you found out you’d been cast as Tina Goldstein and would be part of a whole new era of J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World?**

I was thrilled to get the job. First and foremost, I loved the character so much and had such a good time exploring her in the auditions. You can get a little attached in that process, so it sometimes feels a bit like a heartbreak or a breakup when you don’t get the job because you don’t get to spend any more time with that character. [laughs] I was so fixated on getting to play this character and just loved her so much that, honestly, the size of this film and what it means to so many people didn’t really enter my mind initially.

Then, it slowly dawned on me that I had been invited into this massive pre-existing entity, which was quite an overwhelming realisation. My first memory of the *Harry Potter* series was my little brother just falling into those books and not resurfacing until he was done. That J.K. Rowling got an entire generation reading is extraordinary – I’m amazed, thrilled, and proud to now be portraying one of that phenomenal writer’s characters.

**What was your little brother’s reaction when he found out you’d be doing this film?**

My whole family is so thrilled for this stroke of good luck. I just worked with Ridley Scott on the new *Alien* film and there was this great actress in the cast, Tess Haubrich, who was

11 when *Harry Potter* was 1. When she found out that I was doing this movie, she came to me and I almost didn’t recognise her. She was blushing, and giggling out of control [laughs] – I had never seen her behave like that – it was like meeting a whole new person. People like her – who grew up with this world – are the most amazing fans, and I’m excited that we’re giving them a new, more mature chapter. Although, the kids, I’m certain, will really enjoy it, too. I think this film is going to offer so many surprises, treats, and new elements for people who are already fans of J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World, but, for anyone who, somehow, could be alive now and *not* be familiar with the *Harry Potter* films, our film can stand alone and won’t leave a newcomer’s head spinning with references they don’t know!

**When you were finding your way into the character, how much of Tina came to you intuitively and what aspects did you have to dig a little deeper to find?**

To me, it all feels intuitive. Obviously, there are clues in the script and you search for them and use them as best you can. But I think connecting to a character is like connecting to any human being – either you like them or you don’t. You might not be able to list the reasons why you love your best friend, or what attracted you to them; it’s just something that you feel – a connection, an understanding, or a curiosity that makes you want to get to know them. With Tina, it was her internal struggle that caught my attention.

She seemed to totally doubt herself and to suspect that she wasn’t good enough and, yet, simultaneously, she possessed a confidence, a conviction that she could be great. She’s on

a confidence rollercoaster— when she fails at something, it confirms the worst suspicions she has about herself, and when she succeeds at something, it confirms the greatest hopes she has for herself. I just found that quality – that see-sawing between insecurity and confidence – really beautiful, and a condition, I think, that any human being can relate to it.

**What’s it like then for her to interact with Colin Farrell’s character, Percival Graves, who is a much higher-ranking figure at MACUSA [the Magical Congress of the United States of America], where she works?**

Graves has the job that Tina, in her wildest dreams, hopes to have one day. He’s respected at work, successful, has authority, skill, and confidence – Tina admires him, she’s in awe of him, maybe even has a little crush on him.

**Tina’s first encounter with Newt Scamander, played by Eddie Redmayne, puts them somewhat at odds with each other, but what do you think it is that draws them together as the story unfolds?**

They start to recognise that they’re both outsiders and both a little bit odd, I suppose, and I love that. It’s really tough to be weird until you find other weirdos. [laughs] I think that is beautifully woven into the story from the moment that they notice each other. In many ways, they’re both just starting to become the people they will be; they’re kind of dipping their toe in.

Something I think is interesting about the film is that it’s a coming-of-age story about adults. Even though Newt, Tina, Queen, and Jacob are technically all adults, in their own individual



ways they are each a bit stunted, but as they come together – maybe even *because* they come together – they, finally, begin to ‘come into their own.’

### **How about Tina’s relationship with her sister, Queenie, played by Alison Sudol?**

Really, until these men come into their lives, Tina and Queenie are everything to one another – sisters, best friends, parental figures. They were forced, I think especially Tina, to grow up quickly because they lost their parents young, but despite that painful fate their dynamic is very youthful and sweet. As the older sister, Tina definitely feels Queenie is her responsibility and is very protective of her. Of course, Queenie, being a *legilimens*, can see that Tina is, beneath the surface, very vulnerable and in need of protection, too.

### **What was it like working with Eddie, Alison and Dan Fogler, who plays Jacob Kowalski – the No-Mag [the American term for Muggle] of the group – as the four of you went on this adventure together as actors?**

Most of my scenes were with Eddie, and he’s just a dream. He works so hard, and is so imaginative, intelligent, and generous. He’s just got all the things one hopes to find in a scene partner. In order to feel free to mess up, play, and try things you need a partner you can trust and I definitely found that sense of security working with Eddie.

Then, when the four of us got together, it was really refreshing! Everybody brings a unique energy and does such smart, detailed character work. So it was just really fun to be thrown together and see what would happen. It’s always great to work with people you know you can play off and with.

### **How did you find working with director David Yates, and what kind of balance do you think he brings to the movie in terms of the character work and the immense practical demands of orchestrating a production on this scale?**

David has such a deep understanding of this world because he’s made four *Harry Potter* films before this one. Being around him is similar to being around Jo [J.K. Rowling]. Their suspension of disbelief is so committed you get the feeling that they’re right on the edge of believing that this world is real. They’ve explored so much of it and both have such a strong understanding of it that when you’re around them, that depth of knowledge kind of influences you, rubs off on you, does half the job for you.

Obviously, as an actor, you have to embrace your imagination all the time, but when you’re doing one of these films you have to embrace your most *childlike* imagination – a sense of wonder and uninhibited playfulness. David invited us in to this world so beautifully and really set the tone on set.

It’s so convincing and delightful the way that David talks about the magical creatures in the

film. He speaks about them so casually. ‘An actor will walk in the door’ or ‘A beast will walk in the room’ – it’s all the same to him! When you’re working with CGI, it really makes a difference if the person at the helm can visualise and believe in all of the things and creatures around you that aren’t necessarily physically in front of you on the day.

And Eddie did such great work on Newt’s relationship with all the beasts! All that physical stuff – the mating calls, the way Newt communicates with them, the way they needed to be handled – Eddie came up with all of that, and, in a sense, he really introduces each of the animals to the audience. I found everything he did to be really smart and also just totally charming.

### **Do you have a favorite beast?**

Pickett. Of course, they’re all so amazing but yeah, Pickett’s my guy.

### **David assembled an award-winning creative team for this film, many of whom collaborated with him on *Harry Potter*. What was it like working on the amazing sets created by production designer Stuart Craig and his art department?**

Stuart and his team are incredible. You walk around these environments and it’s extraordinary, the scale as well as the fine detail. There was a scene in the attic of a department store, and there were these shelves stacked high with cases and crates of all sorts of extra stock, housewares, fabrics, toys, etc and, on the side of each shelf, everything had been itemised – all the inventory! You’d pick up a spoon and it’d have a price tag on it. Most of those details won’t even make it into the film but it all, I think, contributes to the texture and mood of the environment.

### **Can you talk about working with costume designer Colleen Atwood on Tina’s wardrobe in the film. Did that process help inform the character for you?**

Absolutely. It was a dream to work with Colleen. She doesn’t just put you in clothes that fit well or look good; she really understands character. It’s detailed, smart work, and I loved everything that she made.

What’s so great about Colleen is that she’s a real collaborator. She comes in with her ideas, and I come in with mine, and we find our way together. I really wanted Tina to wear trousers. That was my idea and something that seemed right to me – that Tina didn’t have much time for herself and, because she lost her parents suddenly, she was thrust into this parental role. I thought she maybe couldn’t be bothered to go to the shop, nor did she have the time, nor would she feel comfortable spending any money on herself. So, we started to build this concept together and then Colleen, obviously, developed the clothes.

The whole look, we thought, would be something she could’ve found in her parents’ wardrobes and thrown together herself. So the

trousers are ill-fitting because they were her dad’s, and she has to take them in at the waist; but, when she takes them in at the waist, they go up too short in the leg. The shirts are her mother’s, so they’re sort of Victorian, rather than current to the period of the ‘20s. Even the shoes are men’s shoes because they belonged to her father. That was where all of that came from – this idea that she was trying to cobble together a look that would give her a responsible, effective aura. *[laughs]*

Also, I do think she definitely has a little tomboy streak. She’s dressing for comfort – to be able to move freely around in the streets – and, also, a little to hide. All of these things we talked about, as well as, obviously, how to play her look in contrast to Queenie’s.

### **Looking back, do you have a favorite scene to play, or a moment during production that was particularly fun or memorable for you?**

Two things. On one of our first days, we shot a scene just crossing the street into my apartment, and on that day, there was a Model T Ford that had crashed into a fire hydrant. It was just background but there was this whole storyline going. There was the mechanic there, and the guy whose car it was; smoke coming up off the car and the wheels that had been damaged when it hit the fire hydrant – I was so struck by all that detailed work.

There was somebody whose job it was to direct that whole thing, to plot it out, stage it, another to cast the driver, the mechanic, another to dress them – all the people it took to create this teeny little background subplot that might never even make it into the film. It’s just amazing to me. I thought, ‘My gosh! All these people around us are working so hard to make our jobs easier, really.’ Everywhere you look, 360 degrees, there’s real life happening and we get to use it if we need it. Maybe we don’t even look up; we just cross the street, look both ways for cars and go in the building, but there’s all this activity happening around us all the time.

It’s like being part of an orchestra, we are all in it together – the actors and, obviously, all the people off-camera who make this thing possible. It’s stunning, and yet no one even realises. When I go to see a movie, I never think about all the people it took to make it. In a film like this, where you have thousands of extras, it might be a little easier to quantify, really, just how many people it takes and even if they’re just on for one day, for maybe three seconds of screen time, all of them make a difference.

Perhaps my favourite day on set was a scene with Tina and Newt on a dock. We were on location in an enormous hanger originally used to build zeppelins. It’s the biggest single-storey building I’ve ever seen in my life, and had this incredible energy to it. We only shot a few takes of that scene, but that was one of my best memories. It was just one of those days that felt electric.

*Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* opens on 17 November 2016.





# NOT A **ROGUE** TALENT

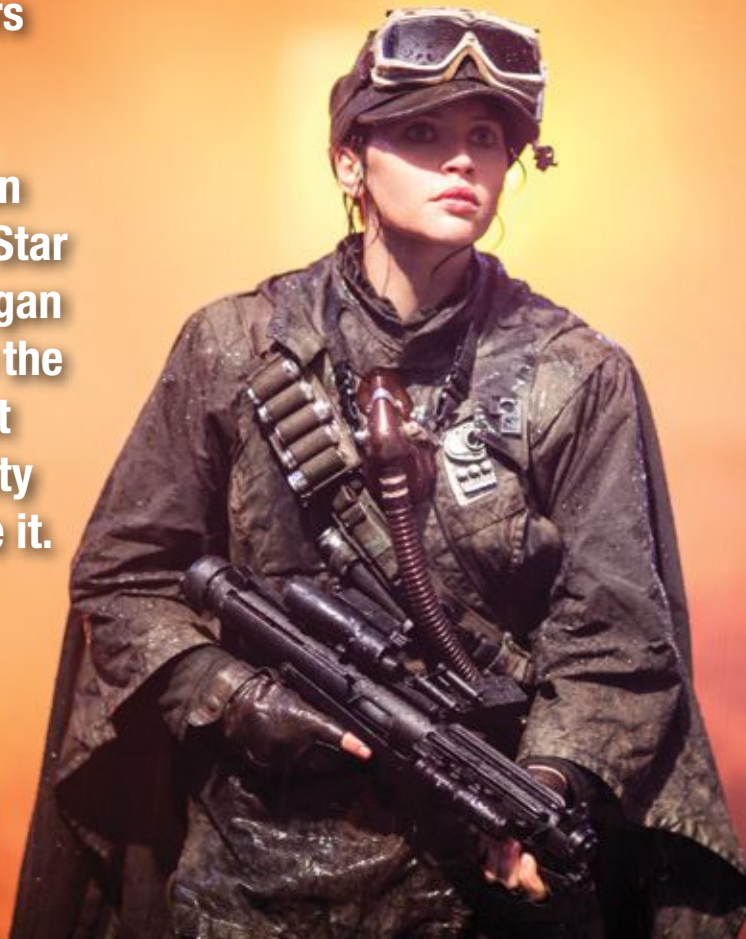
Felicity Jones is the one to watch in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, but she's convinced she'll still be able to have a normal life after the movie comes out







**It's nearly two years since rumours suggesting she'd clinched the lead on *Rogue One*, a new *Star Wars* franchise, began to bubble and now the big reveal is almost upon us. And Felicity Jones can't believe it.**



"You think it can't get more exciting than shooting and production and being on set. And then you realise, now everyone is going to see it and it's like this explosion of anticipation all over again."

Regal and looking much younger than her 33 years in a detailed white shirt, buttoned at the collar and dark fitted trousers, Jones seems calm and practical, despite the word 'excited' being tossed around regularly with abandon.

Having interviewed the Oscar-nominated star several times now, she never appears giddy or detached – there's always a precise, measured concentration present while in the room. A maturity far beyond her contemporaries. Must be the reason why she's scooping the hottest roles in Hollywood.

Since her blistering performance in *Theory of Everything*, Jones has kept it interesting and unpredictable – uneven thriller, *True Story*; hokum in *Inferno* and a forthcoming tearjerker in *A Monster Calls*.

But her biggest reward since the Oscars comes in the form of Jyn Erso, a freedom fighter who leads the Rebellion in *Star Wars* offshoot, *Rogue One*.

And that's about as much as we know and learn as the actress tries to promote the blockbuster. Navigating the tricky terrain, she instead speaks about her feelings on landing the hotly

contested role and what it means to her to be a British female leading the pack.

Guarded, she also speaks about the simpler facets of her early screen career and the decision making process and her reaction when being nearly typecast. She lives in London with boyfriend, commercial director, Charles Guard.

**So here we are, talking about a film you can't really talk about.**

It's a strange thing, this phenomena that's grown and grown [of not talking about the movie].... but it's sort of a cause and effect from intense internet, online scrutiny. And it makes it all the more exciting. I hate spoilers, I hate knowing anything before I go to see it at the cinema. So I'm all for it.

**Though it makes it difficult for you to conduct a normal interview!**

It's not that hard.

**Are you actually in *Rogue One* or is it a big gag?**

I'm definitely in it. I think that would be too elaborate a cover up even for me. Unless the joke's on me.

We're going to safely assume that's not the case.

**Have you seen it yet?**

I've seen parts of it. Quite a bit and I think I was proper shaking with excitement. I still can't quite believe that I'm a part of this world, 'I'm a part of a galaxy far far away'. You can't help but have an intake of breath when you think of how big a moment this is. I'm so excited to see the whole film in its entirety.

**So the calls comes saying, 'we want you for the lead in the new *Star Wars*.' What goes through your mind?**

JONES: Is this a mistake? Have you got the wrong person? Yea, and then, oh my god, this isn't a joke, I'm sitting with Gareth Edwards and he's telling me the story and about these characters and Stormtroopers and weird fantastic creatures and space monkeys with laser blasters, and it doesn't meet to matter that I've never done anything this physical before. Yes, 'this is not a dream, oh my god, it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.' It's life-changing and those opportunities don't come easy. You know, people keep asking me was there hesitation on my part before saying yes and I couldn't accept fast enough.

**After the elation, must come the fear?**

There wasn't ever any real trepidation. Certainly a few jitters but it's the challenge that's ahead, getting to push myself and learn all these kung fu moves which was really cool...









**...you could take on any muggers on the street now?**

Oh yea, I've learned some tricks, there are some moves there. You don't spend hours and hours with kung fu trainers for months and not learn something...I haven't had the chance to try it out and hopefully, I don't have to.

**Are you a changed person since playing Jyn?**

The whole experience has been life-changing, I cannot put it any other way other than life-changing. Every day on set, the bar, the level of intense amazement was raised. When I thought it couldn't get any better, this circus of delights kept delivering beyond my most imaginative expectations.

**It must be the strangest experience to be on set, in this otherworldly world surrounded by aliens and storm troopers and knocking out storm troopers with kung fu moves, and then going home and being normal. Can you be normal or is it too difficult to pull yourself out of?**

I think it's harder to maybe pull yourself out of something that's closer to real life where you can find so many resemblances that remind you of work and that headspace you've been occupying. Or you find you can remain there for longer stretches because you don't have to make as much of a leap.

It's completely different when you're working on something like this. You can hang up your gun belt and go home and relax for the evening and switch off. With lots of bruises, I'm mostly just exhausted. *[laughs]* I know what you mean, is it strange when you've been in that world and then you're in the pub a couple of hours later having a normal conversation. But it's the job. It's all part of what we do.

**After Rey, Jyn is the next kick ass female ruling the Star Wars galaxy, do you think it says a lot about how times have changed?**

I think it's really cool that it's women at the

forefront of this new generation of Star Wars. And British women no less. Daisy and I are really lucky to be in the positions that we're in and that has a lot to do with Kathleen Kennedy, opening the doors for these determined, strong, intelligent female characters and I'm so chuffed and proud to be part of that revolution.

And I'm so happy that it's heading towards this deviation away from paper-thin characters for women, largely because cinema and Hollywood is very significant in the portrayal of women... in that it reflects reality. There's so much sway, you have to have complex, detailed characters with depth, for women and men.

**And I read you said Sigourney Weaver had laid the path for characters like Jyn and Rey...**

She was the trailblazer not only in that genre but on screen as a whole. And I said that to her while we did *A Monster Calls*, I'm sure she hears it all the time but I had to let her know about the influence she had over me, like this crazed fan.

**Once the movie comes out, I'm sure you're being told you'll be hounded by fans morning, noon and night. But do you really see that happening?**

I don't think it will change, I really don't. I still take the Tube to work, take it home. I think it's a lot of how I don't look like myself in these roles, helps me blend in. It just doesn't happen really. And I'm not waiting for it to happen after December, Daisy was saying she was constantly told, you won't be able to walk to Sainsbury's, you'll be mobbed. Hasn't happened.

**What's it like to be incarnated in doll form?**

That is the most bizarre thing. To see yourself in that... it's utterly surreal. You see the level of detail that's gone into it, the clothes, the gun belt, the facial features, it actually looks like me and that's so very out of body to see yourself shrunk down. In a good way, I highly recommend it.

**It seems to be a growing trend, actors subverting expectation, is that what you're doing with your recent choices?**

I never want to categorise myself, ever. I did a couple of costume dramas and I got a tonne of similar scripts because that's how I was being interpreted as an actress, that was my niche. If I feel I'm being pushed into a corner, I'll intuitively dart out of there and move into somewhere else. I'm sure I'll get an action script or two coming my way after this.

**So what's after this then?**

So after this, I don't know really. I'd like to do a comedy maybe, I haven't done one in a while.

**For a young actress, you've enjoyed some remarkably rich, fleshed out roles. Is that from shrewd decision making?**

I genuinely think I'm steeped with luck with the work and the directors I've had the chance to work with, and the roles I've been gifted. I don't know how I've managed that. I guess it's down to openness within your relationships be it with the director, or the writer. Knowing your character and bringing suggestions that kind of tailor more a personal touch to you as an actor which helps it feel less clichéd and superficial.

And then, yes, I've been very lucky, I can't deny. You know, a couple of years ago, I didn't have that luxury as much, having the open dialogue, I just did whatever job came my way because I needed to eat and pay rent and I was happy to be just working. But now, it's...there's more room for discussion and examination of nuances and idiosyncrasies.

**Is that's what coming next, a comedy?**

There's a couple of things that I'm working on right now, that I can't say too much about. Which is the story of my life these days. *[laughs]*

*Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* opens on 15 December 2016.







# ROGUE ONE 101

Who's who in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*



## Jyn Erso

(Felicity Jones)

A checkered past.  
A greater cause.

Putting behind a checkered past by lending her skills to a greater cause, Jyn Erso is impetuous, defiant, and eager to bring the battle to the Empire. Used to operating alone, she finds higher purpose by taking on a desperate mission for the Rebel Alliance.

## Cassian Andor

(Diego Luna)

An intelligence officer for the Rebel Alliance.

An accomplished Alliance Intelligence officer with combat field experience, Captain Cassian Andor commands respect from his Rebel troops with his ability to keep a cool head under fire and complete his missions with minimal resources.



## Bodhi Rook

(Riz Ahmed)

Former Imperial pilot who's seen the light.

A former Imperial pilot, Bodhi has strong piloting and technical skills that he will put to use for the Rebellion. Ever practical, but highly anxious, Bodhi must gather his courage to bring the battle to the Empire.

## Chirrut Îmwe

(Donnie Yen)

A warrior monk with faith in the Force.

Deeply spiritual, Chirrut Îmwe believes all living things are connected through the Force. His sightless eyes do not prevent him from being a highly-skilled warrior. Though he lacks Force abilities, this warrior monk has rigorously honed his body through intense physical and mental discipline.







## Baze Malbus

(Jiang Wen)  
Soldier. Friend.

The harsh reality of his Imperial-occupied home world has hardened

Baze Malbus into a pragmatic soldier and a crack shot with his heavy repeater cannon. Baze has a bravado that provides a marked contrast to the spiritual centeredness of his best friend and moral compass, Chirrut Îmwe.

## Director Orson Krennic

(Ben Mendelsohn)  
Cruel. Brilliant. Obsessed.

As director of Advanced Weapons Research for the Imperial military, Orson Krennic is obsessed with the completion of the long-delayed Death Star project. A cruel but brilliant man, Krennic has staked his reputation on the delivery of the functional battle station to the Emperor.



## Saw Gerrera

(Forest Whitaker)  
Resolved to win the fight  
against the Empire.

A battered veteran of the Clone Wars as well as the ongoing rebellion against the Empire, Saw Gerrera leads a band of Rebel extremists. Saw has lost much in his decades of combat, but occasional flashes of the charismatic and caring man he once was shine through his calloused exterior. Gerrera is bunkered on the ancient world of Jedha, co-ordinating a prolonged insurgency against the Imperial occupation. Saw's ailing health has not withered his resolve to fight.



## K-2SO (Alan Tudyk)

Reprogrammed to fight the  
Empire that made him.

A reprogrammed Imperial security droid now loyal to the Alliance, K-2SO is an alarming sight standing within a secret Rebel base. The pragmatic droid is an effective insertion agent, as he can blend in perfectly at Imperial installations and outposts.





# WOMEN





# ON TOP



With Felicity Jones leading the cast in this month's *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, we take a look at 10 other actresses who kicked ass in blockbuster movies

By Balvinder Sandhu





# Sigourney Weaver

When *Alien* came out in 1979, Weaver stunned audiences with her sheer badass-ness (yes, we know this isn't a real word) and still remains today as one of the best examples of a female lead in a movie. Her Ripley character has been adored by many women – and men too – over the years, and rightly so as she was one of the first women to play a lead in an action movie. And boy did she play it well. She portrayed the role in three sequels too and managed to impress both fans and critics alike each and every time. All hail Queen Sigourney!





This woman needs no introduction, whether it concerns her professional or personal life. And she has been a role model for strong women for a very long time. She first did it for the girls in *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* – and the sequel – bringing the video game character to life and proving that she was more than just a (very) pretty face. Then, just two years ago, she headed the blockbuster *Maleficent*, playing a woman whose heart has turned to stone thanks to her life experiences. The movie did a lot better at the box office than expected and proved that Angie still has what it takes to draw in the crowds as the lead in a movie.



# Angelina Jolie



# Charlize Theron

This South African actress has played a wide range of strong female characters over the years and has won a lot of fans while doing so. She proved she definitely could act, winning an Oscar early on in her career for her lead role in *Monster* (2003). Then she took on the leading role as a mysterious assassin in *Aeon Flux* (2005). Sure, it didn't do very well at the box office but it certainly showed that Theron could carry a movie. She was also equally 'garang' alongside Tom Hardy in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, which is one of the reasons why we love her so much.







# Jennifer Lawrence

Many fans believe that the *The Hunger Games* movies wouldn't have been as successful as they are without lovely Jen. She might seem like all sugar and spice at times but Lawrence is perfectly capable of playing the tough chick too – and she'll have no qualms taking on all the men either. She's the hottest property in Hollywood right now and is certainly proving that she's worth all the big bucks she's earning. We also have to mention her role as Raven/Mystique in the new generation X-Men movies as she sure did hold her own against the likes of James McAvoy and Michael Fassbender.







# Milla Jovovich

Oh, Milla...what can we say about you? The Ukrainian-born actress and model first entered our hearts and minds as the vulnerable Leeloo in *The Fifth Element* (1997) and stole the show, despite acting alongside legends such as Bruce Willis and Gary Oldman. Then, of course, she was Alice in the *Resident Evil* films, which saw her carry the movies more or less solely on her little shoulders. The fact that there have been five *Resident Evil* movies – with another one coming up very soon – shows that she has been able to hold her own in a blockbuster.



# Scarlett Johansson

She's awesome as Black Widow in the Avengers films but sexy Johansson was the main star in director Luc Besson's *Lucy* (2014). She played an average woman who is captured and somehow turned into a drug mule, with some very dangerous consequences. But she manages to get some new-found powers so eventually turns into a merciless warrior who then seeks to take revenge on her captors. Watching Johansson kick serious ass on screen is one of life's simple pleasures.







# Daisy Ridley

Coming from practically nowhere, this English actress blew us all away in her role as Rey in last year's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Even alongside the likes of Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher, Ridley was the one everyone was looking at. She stole the show with her unique girl power and we're glad that we'll be seeing a lot more of her in upcoming Star Wars movies too.



# Rooney Mara

She will always be remembered as the girl with the dragon tattoo because, well, she played Lisbeth Salander in *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*. Sure, Daniel Craig was in that film too but Mara was the one who stole the show. And she was especially impressive because she wasn't very well known yet at that point in time. While she hasn't headed any other big movies since, this role has been enough to put her on our women on top list.



# Melissa McCarthy

She's the funny girl who stole our hearts in 2011 in *Bridesmaids* and we've been in love with her ever since. McCarthy was the woman on top in last year's *Spy*, and even though it starred Jude Law and Jason Statham too, she was the main character, as Susan Cooper, a desk-bound CIA analyst who is thrown into the thick of the action when she goes undercover to infiltrate the world of a deadly arms dealer and prevent a global crisis.





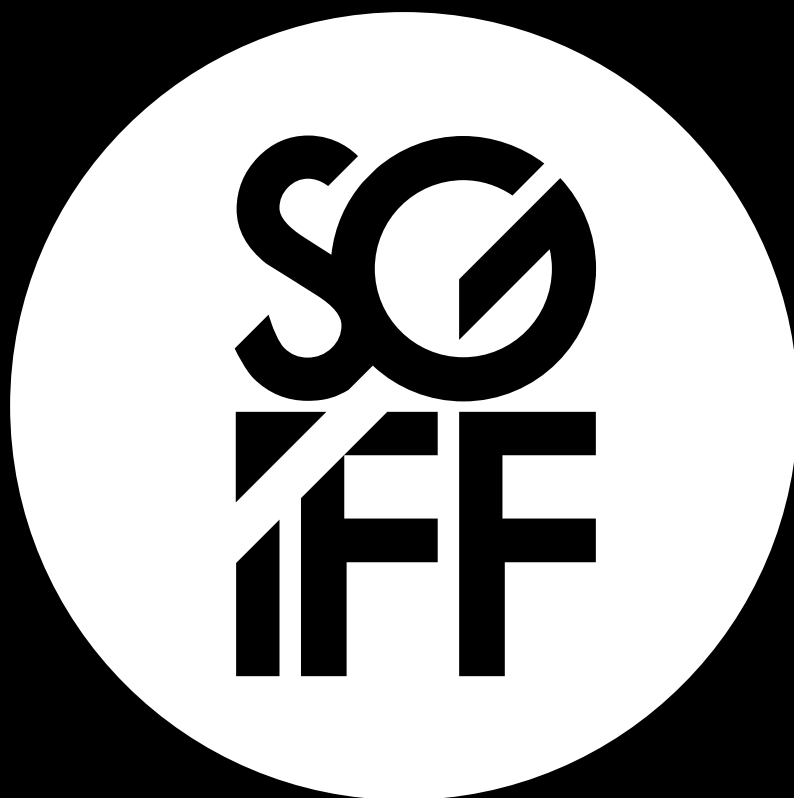


# Kate Beckinsale



Beautiful, talented and oh-so-English, Beckinsale was the lead in four *Underworld* movies, with another one coming very soon. When she first appeared as Selene in 2003's *Underworld*, she entranced us as the woman caught in a war between the vampire and werewolf races. As she goes through the motions trying to decide where her allegiances lie, she also showed some awesome fighting skills as the all-round brassy chick who kicked her way into our hearts.





# MEDIA CONFERENCE

F\*\*\* sneaks a peek at the 2016 Singapore International Film Festival line-up

Jedd Jong

F\*\*\* was at the National Museum of Singapore, in attendance at the press preview for the 27<sup>th</sup> Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF). This year's theme is "telling our stories", and there is no shortage of stories to be told: the line-up comprises 161 feature-length and short films from 52 countries. These include 16 world premieres, nine international premiers and 18 Asian premieres. More than 200 international guests including filmmakers, actors and film scholars are expected to attend screenings and conduct masterclasses and In Conversation panels.

Mike Wiluan is in his third year as the chairman of the SGIFF board. He stated that the festival's organisers are "learning and constantly evolving", promising a "diversity of programming." The festival will have an emphasis on South-East Asia, which Wiluan called "an emerging region" in the global film landscape.

Angeline Poh, the Assistant Chief Executive (Content and Innovation Group) of the Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore (IMDA), then took the

podium. SGIFF is an event under the umbrella of the Singapore Media Festival, which also encompasses the Asian Television Forum (ATF) and the Screen Singapore film market event. Poh called 2016 "an outstanding year for Asian cinema", citing the Singaporean films *Apprentice* and *A Yellow Bird*, which were both screened in competition at Cannes. This year's festival will see the first edition of the SMF Ignite event, training the spotlight on new media content creation.

Yuni Hadi, the executive director of the organising committee, and programme director Zhang Wenjie were invited onstage to give an overview of what we can expect from this year's instalment of the festival. Both looked a little bleary-eyed, with Hadi describing the preceding months as "a crazy whirlwind of watching films". The committee whittled down a staggering 1,600 entries from filmmakers around the world to the 161 that will be screened.

Hadi said that assembling a film festival is "very much like making a soufflé. You start out with very simple ingredients, and it takes some magic to make it happen." This year's opening

film is *Interchange*, an urban fantasy neo-noir directed by Malaysian filmmaker Dain Iskandar Said. The film will have its Asian premiere in Singapore. Hadi explained that she was hoping to screen *Interchange* at last year's festival, but extensive visual effects work delayed the movie's release. *Interchange* will be screened together with *The Pursuit of a Happy Life*, a short film from Singaporean director Gladys Ng. After winning the Best Singapore Short Film award at last year's SGIFF, Ng was commissioned to make a short film for this year's edition of the festival.

*Mrs K*, *Three Sassy Sisters* and *The Road to Mandalay* will be given special presentations. Malaysian director Ho Yuhang's *Mrs K* is an action thriller with spaghetti western elements, starring Hong Kong actress Kara Wai in the titular role. *Three Sassy Sisters* is a musical comedy from Indonesian director Nia Dinata, and is inspired by the classic 1956 Usmar Ismail film *Tiga Dara*. *The Road to Mandalay*, from Burmese director Mida Z, is a drama centring on two Burmese migrants who cross the border into Thailand illegally. The filmmakers and select cast members from each film will attend the respective screenings.





Hadi and Zhang's presentation was punctuated with video messages from Chapman To, Simon Yam and Joseph Gordon-Levitt. *The Mobfathers*, a Hong Kong crime comedy starring and produced by To, will be screened at the festival. Two of Yam's films, *Mrs K* and *The Midnight After*, are part of the line-up. Hadi remarked that Yam - who is having the Cinema Legend Award conferred on him - is in the middle of filming a new movie, and he will only be spending a day in Singapore. Gordon-Levitt explained in the video that he will not be attending, but said: "I would love to come to Singapore and one day, I really, really will want to." Jared Geller, who co-founded the creative collective HitRecord with Gordon-Levitt, will be speaking at the Future of Cinema talk, addressing the shifting landscape of filmmaking, distribution and consumption. HitRecord apparently receives the most project submissions from Singapore, out of all the countries in Asia.

Zhang said that programs focusing on Nepalese short films, Estonian animation and Latin-American cinema "allow us the opportunity to go deeper into certain areas of cinema we don't see very often". This year, the SG Originals

series of talks will be introduced, with local filmmakers such as Jack Neo, Boo Junfeng and Ken Kwek among the speakers. There will also be a talk on the exploration of virtual reality in the making of short films.

The intensive workshop known as the Southeast Asian Film Lab, conducted with the support of the National Youth Council and the Singapore-ASEA Youth Fund, will be headed by India's Anurag Kashyap, with Thailand's Anocha Suwichakornpong and Malaysia's Bernard Chauly serving as mentors. The Youth Jury & Critics Programme is a workshop series which aims to nurture young film jurors and film critics. Victor Fan, senior lecturer at the Department of Film Studies in King's College London, will serve as the programme's mentor.

Director Darren Aronofsky, known for *Requiem for a Dream*, *Black Swan* and *Noah*, will hold an In Conversation talk and will also conduct an audience Q and A following a screening of his first film, the experimental indie and festival darling *Pi*. Vietnam's Tran Anh Hung, Japan's Naomi Kawase, Hong Kong's Herman Yau and Fruit Chan and India's Anurag Kashyap will be

conducting masterclasses during the festival.

"Heavyweights of Asian cinema anchor the festival, but at the same time there is room for us to manoeuvre and discover those who are new to the industry," Hadi explained. On a personal note, she said she is "excited that we are presenting films by strong women directors". Hadi and Zhang emphasised the collaborative nature of the festival, saying that SGIFF is "something we do together."

SGIFF will run from 23 November to 4 December 2016, taking place across various venues including Marina Bay Sands, Capitol Theatre, the National Museum of Singapore Gallery Theatre, Shaw Theatres Lido, National Gallery Singapore Auditorium, the Arts House Screening Room, Filmgarde Bugis+ and Objectifs Chapel Gallery. Tickets are on sale at all SISTIC outlets and online at [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg).



# DARK SUN RISING

Actor and stunt choreographer Sunny Pang gets mean and scary  
in action thriller *Headshot*

Jedd Jong

**Sunny Pang is a fixture of the Singapore entertainment industry. While not as recognisable a star as your typical Channel 8 headliner, Pang's varied contributions to local TV and movies have been impactful.**



The accomplished actor and stunt choreographer founded the Ronin Action Group, a collective of Singapore-based stunt performers. His credits include the films *The Maid*, *Perth*, *Re: Solve* and *The Collector*, and he has starred in local TV shows such as *C.L.I.F.* and *Code of Law*.

At the upcoming 27<sup>th</sup> Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF), Pang will be serving on the jury panel of the Silver Screen awards, alongside directors Naomi Kawase, Herman Yau and Jocelyn Saab. Additionally, two films starring Pang will be screened as part of the festival: Timo Tjahjanto and Kimo Stamboel's (collectively known as 'The Mo Brothers') *Headshot* and Sam Loh's *Siew Lup*. The former is a blood-soaked action thriller in which Pang plays the villain opposite *The Raid*'s Iko Uwais, and the latter is the steamy sequel to Loh's erotic thriller *Lang Tong*.

At *Headshot*'s premiere during the Toronto International Film Festival, Uwais and Pang gave the audience a treat, performing a live fight demonstration after the screening and before the customary audience Q and A session. Pang also obliged *Fangoria* writer Elijah Taylor's (somewhat foolish) request to be punched by the stuntman.

At the SGIFF media conference, Pang sat down with F\*\*\*. In his distinctive rasp and with a hearty laugh, he effusively discussed his experiences making both *Headshot* and *Lang Tong*, his hopes for the future of Singaporean action movies, and whether he has Hollywood dreams.

**This year, two of your films are at the festival. How would you compare your experiences working on *Siew Lup* and *Headshot*?**

Well, [in] one I had to be butt-naked and the

other, I had to be an a\*\*hole. [laughs] They're both good experiences. The international film was big-scale, [*Siew Lup*] was very independent. It's the home base, there's no complaint from me. I love to work with local directors, like Sam Loh. Sam and me, we went back and talked about *Lang Tong*, and for Part 2 [*Siew Lup*], when he went to write the script, I said that we needed to change some things and he agreed with me. I like directors with open minds.

It's the same with *Headshot*. Timo [Tjahjanto, of] the Mo Brothers, has an open mind as well. When I first read the script, I said, "are you going to make me speak in Bahasa [Indonesia]?" He said, "yeah!" and I said, "no, no! In three weeks, I'm not going to make any Bahasa for you!" So I [suggested] that maybe this character is called 'Lee', because there's nobody called Lee in Indonesia. I said, "maybe this guy is from elsewhere, comes over to invade you guys, and moves away again." He's pretty much open



to concept, acting, action, whatsoever. It's a good feeling that you can collaborate [with] overseas people to see how they work, and also collaborate with local directors who are really ambitious to do something different. I'm always choosing projects that will challenge me.

One, you've got a lot of stress. A big name like Iko Uwais, who's internationally known, I'm just a little... [laughs] I don't feel inferior about it, but then again I'm excited to work with people on that kind of level to improve myself and bring whatever I learn overseas back here. With Sam, we improve each other and help each other. We both love Korean cinema, so we tried to go bolder to approach that level. I want it to look seedier than usual, because I don't believe in perfect pictures. To be [imperfect] is to be perfect. I think it's all about the truth of what normal people are. I might be an actor, but if I need to look like crap, I need to go to that level. I was constantly suggesting different ideas, that's how good a collaboration it was. I was very happy with both productions.

**The Mo Brothers' reputation is that they have a penchant for horror and gore. What were they like in real life?**

In real life, they were a\*\*holes. [laughs] No, I'm kidding. In real life, they are very down to earth, very easy to work with and very open-minded, like I said before. I met Timo three to four years ago, and we talked about making films together. One of my friends actually introduced him to me, and he saw my work and he went, "this is the guy whom I want to use." We were supposed to work on this project called *The Night Comes for Us*, which is a very high-profile film, but somehow it was halted for a while. I came back, and he called me and said, "whatever the next film that I do is, you'll be in it," and *Headshot* came around. I'm very honoured and appreciative of what was given to me. They were surprised by the commitment I gave to them and *Headshot* was wonderful, both of them were wonderful.

**As an action director and stunt performer, what do you see as the future of action cinema in Singapore?**

I have a stunt team here right now, and whatever I learn outside, I'm actually bringing here. I'm mentored by two persons right now. One is from Hong Kong, his name is Alip [Santosa] and he is based in Indonesia, the other person is *The Raid* and *The Raid 2* director Gareth Evans. If I do big action, I will seek his advice. I'm hoping that I can bring something [to] the table. Not just myself, I'm training some male and female students, hopefully to take over my position, because I'm 44-years-old. [laughs]

I'll try to do whatever it is, but I really hope that I can do something for local cinema in terms of action. Not cheesy, not cheap. But of course, we need time, we need money to train them. We need to build the base. Nothing comes cheap. We have to use whatever we can, utilise the budget properly. Maybe shoot in Batam with a Singapore crew, or in Malaysia. You've got to think smart, because everything boils down [to]

dollars and cents. I'm in this industry for a long time, and I understand how it functions. There are good and bad directors, I meet them both. I prefer to be with the good ones. [laughs] To be honest with you, when I was filming *Headshot*, back in my head, I told myself, "I can't screw this up because I carry a Singapore flag." In the end, this film went over to the Toronto Film Festival and the Austin Film Festival, and I was there, in Toronto and Texas. I got praised by the bloggers and journalists there, so I went, "wah, heng (relieved) ah!"

**How fun is it playing a bad guy?**

Yeah, fun man! Oh my goodness. I would love to play the Joker; I would love to play Bane. I would love to play something different. This one is pretty much an old guy. Every one of us has our own perception of good and evil. All relative. My perspective of good can be bad, your perspective of bad can be good. Nobody knows what it's all about. I play the part when everybody thinks I'm bad, but I think it's good for my own business, my own ego. When I read it, I went "holy s\*\*\*! It's on, let's do it!" So I was just having a lot of fun.

**Iko Uwais, he had a small role in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Do you see yourself getting into Hollywood in supporting roles?**

[laughs] To be honest with you, I don't think that much. I mean that. It takes me a while to be where I am right now. I look at the films that I've done before, regardless of the results, I keep an open mind. If I were able to be there, that's good, because I carry a Singapore flag. If not, but if I still can carry the Singapore flag and do a good film to sell to the world to show them where Singapore is, that's good too. Whichever it is, I hope that Singapore films will make their mark on the world stage.

**On an episode of the reality competition show *The 5 Search*, the contestants were put through their paces and had to film an action scene. You were coaching them as the action director; what was that experience like?**

[laughs] Dreadful! No, no. They were all relatively young and the young people think that it is rather easy to be an actor. To be a screen actor on film, it's very different. It's not just because you have the look, you gotta have that X-factor in understanding the script, to understand what's behind you, what's around you, what's in front of you. They came at it in this bubble of their own, thinking it's so easy to be just an actor or an action actor. We've gone through mud, sweat, blood, years, broken bones, broken necks, trial by fire. It's not that easy. Sometimes we get punched in the face as well. We get punched in the face, we get kicked in the face, we get hit in the body, we have to go through all that before getting where we are.

After a little bit of training, they started to gas out, and complain a little. I think they needed a reality check and I was there to give them a reality check about doing action films. During the shooting of the fight scene, me and the director Glenn Chan were both looking at the



action. We showed them what to do. Clearly, only two or three of them knew what they were doing. The rest just didn't care. We even a shot a video, like a stunt pre-viz, of what they needed to do. Half the time, I was looking at the director going... [shakes head] I mean, I can't blame them as well, given such short notice, they were surprised to see us there. A surprise assignment, which is good. I like to see what kind of pressure they can take. Of course, I was being a little mean, but it's a cold reality check they needed to have before they even step into this line. It's just very different, especially for films. TV, I'm not too sure anymore, but when it comes to film, it's really demanding. At the same time, I can see some of them have what it takes. They should be given the proper lessons.

**What are some of the action films you've seen this year that stood out to you, be they from Asia or Hollywood?**

2016? [pauses] So far... there's none. I can't remember whether I watched Donnie Yen's interview. But I was into *Daredevil* on Netflix. It's not just because of the action, but because of the contrast of the two different heroes fighting it out with each other, I liked that. Punisher and Daredevil, that I was engrossed in. On the other hand, you should watch *Headshot*, it's pretty good. [laughs] We had such a short time for training, three weeks during the rehearsal. I think it's a miracle we could do something that extraordinary.

*The 27<sup>th</sup> Singapore International Film Festival runs from 23 November 2016 to 4 December 2016. Tickets are available from [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg).*





# LIVING BETWEEN FRAMES

Filmmaker Jerrold Chong talks to F\*\*\* about his stop-motion short film *Eclipse*

By Jedd Jong

Stop-motion animation is among the most painstaking ways a story can be told, but the results have the potential to be enthralling, igniting the imagination in a way other mediums do not. Jerrold Chong is a filmmaker whose stop-motion animated short film *Eclipse* is being screened as part of the Singapore Panorama short films program at the 27<sup>th</sup> Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF).

The six-minute-long film is set on the day of an impending solar eclipse, and centres on the relationship between a boy named Jake and his father. Chong spoke to F\*\*\* during a meet-and-greet with Singaporean filmmakers at the Ibis Hotel. Chong brought along the puppets showcased in the film, which were a wonder to behold up close. The tactility of the fabrics and the stylised yet simple faces gave the puppets a great deal of personality, even when they were just lying motionless on the table.

Chong graduated with a Bachelor in Fine Arts from the prestigious California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) earlier this year. CalArts is the alma mater of Pixar Animation Studio's founders – the 'A113' Easter Egg found in all of Pixar's films is a reference to the classroom with that designation at the school. Chong recalled geeking out when the likes of John Lasseter, Pete Docter and Brad Bird dropped in to meet students. While studying at CalArts, Chong worked as an animation intern on the Oscar-nominated *Anomalisa*, directed by Charlie Kaufman and Duke Johnson.

Chong's works have been screened at numerous international film festivals, including the Encounters Short Film and Animation Festival in Bristol, Animatronics Animation Festival in Helsinki, Short Shorts Film Festival in Tokyo, and Bucheon International Animation Festival in Korea. In 2015, his film *Nascent* clinched the Best Animation Award at Singapore Short Film Awards.

In addition to having *Eclipse* screened at SGIFF, Chong will participate in the Southeast Asian Film Lab. Overseen by Indian director Anurag Kashyap, with Thailand's Anocha Suwichakornpong and Malaysia's Bernard Chaully serving as mentors, it is an intensive six-day story development workshop. Young filmmakers from Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Myanmar and Singapore are participating in the workshop, with the intention of developing their screenplays into feature films.

Chong's project *Ten Dollars* tells the story of a young boy and the girl he has a crush on spending a day out on the town, with the announcement of their classmate's suicide casting a shadow over their adventure.

Chong told F\*\*\* that it takes about one hour, not including set-up, to animate one second of footage. He discussed the challenges involved, his inspirations and the themes of *Eclipse* and *Ten Dollars*.

**What drew you to the art form of stop-motion animation and what made you want to take on the challenge?**

The process is very meditative for me. It is very challenging and frustrating. Most of the time, you're very lonely in the black box and it's frustrating because you make mistakes along the way. But for me, those mistakes, the hand of the animator in the shot, is part of the beauty of animation. Especially now, when there are a lot of CG films where everything is pixel-perfect, bringing back the human touch to the medium is what really attracted me.

**The idea of wabi-sabi, perfection in imperfection.**

Right! You can make it as detailed as you want, but the seams still show. The material for me

is very powerful. On the big screen, these [textures] will pop out. There's a certain magic in seeing something that is dead, it's all wires inside, then through the process, it moves, it comes alive. It's almost like the first cinema, when they had people taking photos and [spinning] it at 24 frames a second...

**The zoetrope.**

The zoetrope, yeah. That magical feeling still exists in stop-motion.

**What was your approach to storytelling in making *Eclipse*?**

A lot of the narrative was like a parable. There are a lot of metaphors. For example, the idea of an eclipse represents [the father and son's] estrangement from each other, that's the premise of the story. For the dad to have a moose's head is more a symbol of this refusal to speak, of the other. Someone who's foreign, very strange. For me, my relationship with my father is important, but it doesn't have the same closeness and warmth as [with] my mum. I think in an Asian context, the dad is usually this strong, silent figure, stubborn, fierce – who provides food, and very important things, but it's harder to have a connection with him.

**Did you machine the armatures yourself?**

This [puppet] has a wire armature, so it's very basic copper wire. Then there's another one which is machine. It's a ball-and-socket [structure] that's made by professionals, which you then buy and customise, building on top of it.

**What are some of your influences in terms of animation and filmmaking in general?**

I personally watch more live-action cinema. For me, [Stanley] Kubrick and Ingmar Bergman are





two of my favourite filmmakers whom I always turn to for inspiration. In terms of animation, Czechoslovakian and Estonian stop-motion has a rich history.

**What are your thoughts on the work of Laika, currently the most prominent stop-motion animation studio?**

Um...it's positive and negative. They are one of the biggest studios that are putting this medium on the big screen, but I think they've overdone it with the CG. If you research into it, around 70% of the film sometimes is CG, and they try to...fake it as stop-motion. I don't agree with that direction as much. For me, the mistakes, the imperfections are what make stop-motion very magical. As audience members, you don't think about the medium, it loses that factor. For example, I'm not sure if you seen *Anomalisa*?

**Yes, Charlie Kaufman.**

Yes, yes. That, I think is a super-favourite film of mine. That film's story deals with the medium of stop-motion as this very fragile, unreal medium brought to life, and Charlie Kaufman is so smart to weave that into the story.

**The 3D-printed faces that fall off, exposing the mechanism of the faces**

It's quite a philosophical film, what is reality...

**The subjectivity of experience.**

Subjectivity, yes. That whole theme was really strengthened by the use of stop-motion. It would be very different if were shot live-action.

**So you're a proponent of the audience being aware of how the film is made? Some filmmakers like to hide the magic, with the reasoning that it will pull audiences out of the film otherwise.**

Yes. If you look at the films of Kubrick or Bergman, the films really make you aware of the camera. It's very designed, it makes you very aware of the editing. By no means does it try to make the editing seamless. There's a bit of immersion in the story, but at the same time, the form of the film plays a part in the experience.

**What were your formative films as a kid?**

One of the films that really made me want to go into filmmaking was [writer] Charlie Kaufman's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. My parents never brought me to the cinema, other than watching Pixar [films]. But after watching *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, something clicked. Something about the way it used editing. [Director] Michel Gondry has a history of stop-motion animation too.

**Are you planning to progress from short films to feature films?**

Ideally, that's the case. I wouldn't call myself an animator first, because I also want to make live-action films.

**Can you tell us about *Ten Dollars*, which you're developing at the workshop during SGIFF?**

It's inspired by the cases of very young children [in Singapore] committing suicide. One thing that really stood out to me was how the adult world talks about it a lot, but never wants to have a chance to hear it from the child's perspective. The adults going, "The police should have done this, the school should have done this," it reflects a paternalistic view of the world. The story is about this boy who finds a \$10 note on the floor before school. After the teacher tells [the class] the bad news [about a student having committed suicide], he asks this girl whom he has a crush on out to roam the streets and spend the \$10, buying ice-cream.

The journey is the main story, but obviously the news that morning casts a shadow over the whole adventure.

**Would you say one of the main themes is a loss of innocence?**

I see it more as a coming-of-age film. From my perspective, it's trying to empower these kid characters more within this space where the adults are trying to control [things]. In stop-motion, you can make tiny puppets, so the idea of miniatures is there. The adults will be huge, bigger than normal, exaggerating the point of view from a child's perspective. All you see are big legs walking past them. If they look up, they'll have these super-distorted small heads. In that sense, I think animation can be very playful, visually.

**Because things don't have to be literal, and sometimes it's better if they aren't.**

Yes, yes.

**What is your advice to those who are interested in making stop-motion animated films but are daunted by the challenges they might face?**

I would say just keep making films, whether it's live-action or animation. Do not be afraid to make mistakes. Your own self barrier is being scared that you can't do it. For me, I constantly feel it, but at the end, it's just taking the plunge, making it and seeing how it turns out. Usually, it starts to reward you.

*SGIFF runs from 23 November to 4 December 2016. For tickets and more information about SGIFF, visit [sgiff.com.sg](http://sgiff.com.sg)*









\*\*\*

**R(A)**

REVIEWS ANONYMOUS

**A STREET CAT NAMED BOB**

BAD SANTA 2

**BILLY LYNN'S LONG HALFTIME WALK**

DEATH NOTE: LIGHT UP THE NEW WORLD

**DENIAL**

THE WARRIOR'S GATE (勇士之門)

**I AM NOT MADAME BOVARY (我不是潘金蓮)**

INCARNATE

**MOANA**

THE MENU (導火新聞線)

**THE WHOLE TRUTH**

SING

**AND MORE...**

**I AM NOT MADAM BOVARY**

Hollywood's imminent self-destruction in a frenzy of anti-Trump sentiment is no cause for despair, not if the Chinese film industry continues to produce movies like this



# A STREET CAT NAMED BOB

**Genre:** Comedy/Drama **Runtime:** 1h 43min **Rating:** PG13  
(Some Drug References and Coarse Language)

**Director:** Roger Spottiswoode **Cast:** Luke Treadaway, Bob the Cat, Ruta Gedmintas, Joanne Froggatt, Anthony Head

**Opens:** 1 December 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

It must be a source of frustration to ailurophiles that there are so many inspirational dog movies, but not too many about cats. Cats are often depicted on the big screen as aloof, if not malicious, and one could argue, not without grounds. Here is an uplifting film based on a true story with a cat at its centre. Raise your paws in celebration!

James Bowen (Treadaway) is a downtrodden homeless busker, who sings and plays the guitar outside Covent Garden station in London. He's enrolled in a methadone program in an effort to get clean, and James' drug support counsellor Val (Froggatt) finally secures a bedsit for him. Shortly after moving in, James comes face-to-face with an intruder: an orange cat. James' neighbour Betty (Gedmintas), a volunteer at an animal shelter, helps James care for the cat, and christens him 'Bob'. Soon, James and Bob become inseparable, and Bob accompanies James as he goes busking, riding on James' shoulders. The cat becomes a hit with tourists and Londoners alike. James gets a job selling *Big Issue* magazines, and the other vendors become jealous of the attention he receives thanks to Bob. As James fights to keep sober and attempts to repair his relationship with his estranged father Nigel (Head), Bob stays steadfastly by his side.

*A Street Cat Named Bob* is billed as a "feel-good family holiday movie", and there's a cat wearing a scarf on the poster. How can it not be overwhelmingly cloying? This reviewer was surprised that the film doesn't sugar-coat the plight of the homeless and how they become pariahs of society, often becoming drug addicts. There are also multiple uses of the expletive "s\*\*\*", as well as a somewhat terrifying montage depicting James going cold turkey. Sure, it is engineered to elicit cries of "aww" from the audience and it does get repetitive in the middle, but *A Street Cat Named Bob* isn't the stale pool of treacle it could've been. Veteran director Roger Spottiswoode appears to invest a good deal of heart in telling James' (and Bob's) story, and there are moments of genuine emotion.



Treadaway's raw, convincing portrayal of a man eking out a living on the fringes of society is devoid of vanity and does tug at the heartstrings. James starts out gaunt, scraggly and unkempt, so while he's nowhere near as cuddly as his feline co-star, he's no less sympathetic. Treadaway shares good chemistry with co-star Gedmintas, and it turns out that they have been dating for some years in real life. Gedmintas' Betty does veer dangerously close to the (dreaded?) 'manic pixie dream girl' archetype, but their relationship progresses realistically and she becomes a valuable part of James' and Bob's lives. The real James has a cameo towards the end of the film. It's an easy one to spot.

Froggatt lends a maternal warmth tempered with sternness as Val, who keeps James on track. Head is a convincing upper-class, middle-aged man who's tried to move on in his life and whose new wife is none too fond of James. In part because he's played Giles on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, one of TV's best father figures, there's hope that Nigel will accept James back into his life.

Naturally, the star here is Bob the Cat, in the role he was born to play. While Bob shares the titular part with other cats including Oscar, Jaffa, Leo, Nicki and Trayce, Bob ended up playing himself for the bulk of the film. Cats

do not have a reputation for being affectionate, but once their trust and respect are won, they're certainly capable of love. Bob seems very comfortable being around Treadaway-as-James, and it leads one to wonder if Bob was aware that this was an actor playing his real-life owner. This reviewer will admit to giggling in delight when Bob lifts his paw to give James a high-five. Alas, the film jettisons the origins of Bob's name: James named him after the *Twin Peaks* character Killer BOB.

Even if you haven't read the best-selling book that James wrote with Garry Jenkins and are unfamiliar with the story, the film's trajectory is easy to predict. We know that Bob will give James new purpose and although he'll hit several snags, things will conclude happily. *A Street Cat Named Bob* does not reach the heights of the 'inspirational true story' genre, but it is well-acted and moving in its own right. This reviewer promised himself he wouldn't use any cat puns in this review, but what the heck: *A Street Cat Named Bob* is up to scratch.

**Summary:** *A Street Cat Named Bob* is unflinching in its portrayal of homelessness and addiction. While its tale of someone finding meaning in his life after bonding with a pet is standard stuff, it is charming and earnest.

Jedd Jong



# BAD SANTA 2

**Genre:** Comedy **Runtime:** 1h 32min **Rating:** TBA  
**Director:** Mark Waters **Cast:** Billy Bob Thornton, Tony Cox, Brett Kelly, Kathy Bates, Christina Hendricks, Ryan Hansen  
**Opens:** 24 November 2016

**RATING** ★★☆☆☆



Ho ho f\*\*\*ing ho – everyone's favourite chain-smoking, alcoholic, swearing, sex-addicted Santa is back. Willie Stokes (Thornton), a ne'er-do-well conman, thinks his days dressing up as Santa Claus with his accomplice Marcus Skidmore (Cox) playing the part of an elf are over. The duo used to rob department stores at Christmas, but after Marcus shot Willie eight times in the back, it seemed unlikely that their partnership would resume. Years later, Marcus ropes Willie in to steal from the coffers of Regent (Hansen), the corrupt head of the charity Giving City. Regent's wife Diane (Hendricks), who oversees the charity's operations, catches Willie's eye. Willie is forced to work alongside his estranged mother Sunny (Bates), a hardened criminal who has orchestrated the heist. The trio's plans are disrupted by Thurman Merman's (Kelly) arrival in Chicago. Willie won't admit it, but he's grown fond of the kid, whose father was imprisoned and whose mother died. As Willie spends Christmas with this peculiar 'family', the ruse is in danger of being uncovered.

*Bad Santa* has become a cult comedy, an ode to bitter self-destructiveness that serves to counteract saccharine holiday fare. *Bad Santa* was shocking and irreverent, and suffice it to say, audiences are harder to get a rise out of 13 years later. The idea was first mooted around 2009, and *Bad Santa 2* has finally come to fruition. *Bad Santa 2* doesn't try to top its predecessor in the offensiveness stakes: the language, political incorrectness and bawdiness are presented matter-of-factly. Director Mark Waters of *Mean Girls* fame replaces the first film's director Terry Zwigoff. Johnny Rosenthal and Shauna Cross' screenplay is as salty as one would expect, with humour and dialogue that keeps in line with the first film's tone. The overarching plot revolving around robbing the crooked leader of a charity gives the film enough structure for the jokes to be built on.

Willie Stokes has become a signature character for Thornton, and nobody quite plays surly like he does. While this is by no means a subtle movie, there's a degree of nuance that Thornton brings to Willie that enriches the



character. Things do get repetitive – there are only so many ways one can be belligerent. However, Thornton's attempts to find the barely perceptible flicker of light deep within Willie's blackened heart provide some surprisingly moving moments. It wouldn't be *Bad Santa* without Cox's double-crossing sidekick Marcus, and the two like each other even less than in the first film. It is generally funny, but again, the back-and-forth bickering can get tiresome.

The big coup here is Bates. Many comedy sequels have used relatives played by big names to continue the story, with mixed results, but Bates is just what *Bad Santa 2* needs. In meeting Willie's mother, we see just why he's so screwed up. Sunny's term of endearment for her son is 's\*\*\*stick', and Bates works her way through the script's myriad profanities with aplomb. She fully understands the cynical spirit of *Bad Santa* and is a hoot to watch. It's fun to see Sunny pretending to be a kindly old lady, dressing as Mrs. Claus for the charity, and then swiftly reverting to her mouth-like-a-truck-driver self.

Unfortunately, Lauren Graham couldn't return because she was busy with filming the *Gilmore Girls* revival for Netflix. Our leading lady here



is Hendricks, whose patented mix of sweet and sexy is a fine complement to Thornton's gruff curmudgeon tendencies. Of course, even given Willie's multiple shortcomings, he's just catnip to the ladies and Diane falls for him. It's fun to see Kelly return as Thurman all these years later. While there are a great number of jokes at the expense of Thurman's apparent mental difficulties, his naivete and sweetness and the effect he has on Willie give the film a semblance of a soul.

A belated sequel to a popular comedy is a tricky proposition: in recent times, we've seen *Anchorman 2* succeed, but *Dumber* and *Dumber Too* and *Zoolander 2* fumble the landing. *Bad Santa 2* takes another bite out of that acid-soaked candy cane, but there's just enough character development from the first film. It's fun to see Willie, Marcus and Thurman return, with Bates' brassy presence mixing things up.

**Summary:** As crude, mean and unapologetically funny as the first go-round, *Bad Santa 2* avoids being merely more of the same thanks to Kathy Bates' supporting turn.

Jedd Jong



# BILLY LYNN'S LONG HALFTIME WALK

**Genre:** Drama **Runtime:** 110 minutes **Rating:** M18: Sexual Scene & Coarse Language **Director:** Ang Lee **Cast:** Joe Alwyn, Kristen Stewart, Chris Tucker, Garrett Hedlund, Vin Diesel, Steve Martin **Opens:** 10 November 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

With less than a month to the big reveal of the Golden Globes nominations and the announcement of the Oscars nominees shortly after, the race to the awards season is on. Seasoned award veterans Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep have already started the ball rolling with their award- buzzworthy entries of *Sully* and *Florence Foster Jenkins*, respectively. Now, two-time Best Director Oscar-winner Ang Lee has joined the race, as he unveils his latest effort and the first of many highly-anticipated Oscar-Best-Picture-contender buzz films to hit our screens – *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*.

Adapted from the bestselling novel of the same name by Ben Fountain that took inspiration from the 2004 Dallas Cowboys' Thanksgiving Halftime Show, the film delves into the internal psyche of 19-year-old U.S. army specialist Billy Lynn (Alwyn) over the course of one eventful day. Heralded as heroes after video footage of their heroic actions to save their sergeant Shroom (Diesel) went public, Lynn and his fellow surviving Bravo Squad mates are brought home from Iraq on a two-week nationwide 'Victory Tour'. To mark the end of their tour, a special guest appearance by Lynn, his seven squadron mates and their sergeant David Dime (Hedlund) was planned at the aforementioned halftime game, where they would perform alongside Destiny's Child. And over the course of almost two hours, it is this momentous day that director Lee chose to chart through Lynn's baby-blue eyes, through interweaving scenes of flashbacks and the stark contrast between the harsh veracities of war and the nation's varying perceptions of it.

With the burden of an entire film on his shoulders, 25-year-old newcomer Alwyn does not disappoint, proving his worth. This is no mean feat for the young lad, considering that this is his debut turn at a leading-man role, having been cast merely two days after leaving his training days behind at the London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Reportedly having won the titular role because of his 'ability to communicate the book's paradox of war with just his facial expressions',



Londoner Alwyn certainly does not let director Lee down, convincingly and heartbreakingly conveying a myriad of complex emotions of an internally-conflicted soldier through his numerous close-up shots.

Widely reported as one of the film's biggest selling points, in an unprecedented bold choice made by Lee, 4K high-resolution 3D and 120 frames per second cameras have been used in the filming of this movie, to further enhance and boost Alwyn's performance. Lee's aim of this ground-breaking technique is to completely immerse the audience, allowing them to most intimately and realistically see and empathise with Lynn's journey through his eyes. Proving to be most effective with the flashback war moments in the film, it allows audiences to experience 'first-hand' the horrors of wartime combat chillingly up close and personal. However, as promising as all that sounds, it is with sad regret that our local experience with this film would be slightly marred by the fact that Singapore will unfortunately be screening the film in the standard release of 2D at 24 frames per second. This is due to our local cinemas not having the capability to support the high frame rate of 120 frames per second.

On a brighter note, the film takes many by surprise with a remarkably vulnerable and sensitive performance by Diesel. Quite the departure from his usual action blockbuster roles in films such as *Pitch Black* and the *Fast and Furious* franchise, the actor impresses with his portrayal of the philosophical and emotionally expressive Sergeant Shroom. As the mentor and quasi-father-figure to Lynn, Diesel and Alwyn successfully tug at the audience's heartstrings in some of the most endearing moments in the film.

As with his previous directorial masterpiece, *The Life of Pi*, Lee yet again parallels two worlds with this film, this time seamlessly

interweaving Lynn's memories back in war-torn Iraq and juxtaposing them with his present day moments, to reveal piece by piece the horrific build-up leading to Shroom's death. This juxtaposition also serves to blatantly contrast the disparity between the American public's dismissive indifference or rose-tinted perception of the war experiences of these U.S. Army soldiers and the cold hard truth about the traumatic and punishing circumstances these men actually face during warfare.

Sadly, while Lee may have succeeded with the marriage of cutting-edge technology and enthralling storytelling in *The Life of Pi*, with *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk* however, it's his over-ambitiousness that ultimately does the film in. Trying to cramp in a war tragedy, a love story and a family drama all into one, while attempting a social commentary on heroism and at the same time, experimenting with an entirely new breakthrough technology medium, simply results in a meandering, unfocused, and disorientating storyline that would have audiences just as muddled as Lynn in his semi-suppressed PTSD state.

While the verdict is still out on whether Lee will score yet another Oscar Best Director nomination for his unrelenting efforts in challenging the norms of cinematic technology, it can be pretty safe to say that the disappointing film has pretty much lost its chance at entering the Best Picture race.

**Summary:** Try as they might, the breakthrough performance of newcomer Joe Alwyn and a surprisingly good, vulnerable role portrayal by Vin Diesel, as well as breaking edge film technology, could not save this film from being done in by the over-ambitiousness of film savant Ang Lee.

Jonathan Sung



# DEATH NOTE: LIGHT UP THE NEW WORLD

**Genre:** Action/Fantasy **Runtime:** 2h 15min **Rating:** PG  
(Some Violence) **Director:** Shinsuke Sato **Cast:** Masahiro  
Higashide, Sosuke Ikematsu, Masaki Suda, Erika Toda **Opens:**  
10 November 2016

**RATING** ★★☆☆☆

The thing about sequels that pick up years after their iconic predecessor film or films is that they often come with the hefty burden of great expectations of the existing fan base and inevitable comparisons against the original. Whether be it sci-fi classics like the *Star Wars* trilogy, action blockbusters like *Jurassic Park* or even slasher horror flicks like *Halloween* or *The Blair Witch Project*, more often than not, these decade-or-so-later sequels never quite match up to the brilliance of their originating films. Such would unfortunately be the case for *Death Note: Light Up The New World* as well.

For those unacquainted with the film franchise, the first live-action film adaptation of the Japanese manga series, written by Tsugumi Ohba and illustrated by Takeshi Obata, was released in 2006. The titular Death Note is a supernatural notebook that allowed its owner to claim the life of anyone whose name is written within it while visualising the person's face in his or her mind. Tatsuya Fujiwara starred in the film as Light Yagami, known also by 'Kira', which is derived from 'killer', who made use of the Death Note to execute evil-doers based on his personal judgement, as well as anyone else who got in his way. Pitted against him was L, an extremely quirky and socially awkward genius detective, played by Kenichi Matsuyama.

Completing the trio of core characters is Erika Toda's character of Misa Amane, whose story arc began at the end of the first film and continued on into the second film, *Death Note 2: The Last Name*. Not only was Misa bestowed with a second Death Note, she also received the unique gift of Shinigami eyes, making her deadlier as it allowed her to identify and pen in the fatal notebook anyone she sees by their true names. Smitten with Light, Misa joined him as a vigilante too, aiding her beloved in his warped mission and to dispose of L, who stood in their way. Ultimately though, tragedy ensued as both Light and L lost their lives and Misa her memory by the end of the second film.

In this new 2016 film, the story picks up a decade after the aftermath of the previous



two films. Here, four more Death Notes, in addition to the previous two picked up by Light and Misa, have found their way onto Earth, triggering off death by the masses in similar fashion to Light's orchestrated ones 10 years ago. Taking over the reins from L and Light are their successors: L's protégé, who had been cloned from his DNA, Ryuzaki (Ikematsu) and Kira-worshipping cyber-terrorist Yuki Shien (Suda). Also implicated in this new face-off are special task force agent Tsukuru Mishima (Higashide), who is bent on procuring and securing all six Death Notes, and the returning Misa.

Ryuk, the apple-loving Shinigami or 'God of Death', who was Light's companion, also makes his return to the film franchise in this latest instalment, together with two brand new Shinigamis – Bepo and Arma. Capitalising on his popularity, the creepily cute and humorous animated character even stars in the recently-released promotional video that hilariously spoofs the PPAP Pen Pineapple Apple Pen music video, which netizens can check out on Youtube.

While it is evident that director Sato aspired to make this sequel bigger and more spectacular with more Death Notes, more Shinigamis, a higher body count, as well as more twists and turns to the plotline, the outcome is quite the contrary. In this instance, less would really have been more, especially since some of the plot twists are really pointless and only serve to confuse the audience unnecessarily and make the storyline less coherent. The addition of four more Death Notes also seems redundant since the new notebook bearers hardly have much screen time, much less make any impact on the



main battle in the film.

While one main highlight of the original two films was the battle of wits between Light and L, their successors here feel like inferior knockoffs of the masters, never quite measuring up to their brilliance throughout the course of the film. Here, Ryuzaki comes off as trying too hard instead of being believably eccentric as L was, while Shien just pales when it comes to being the diabolical villain mastermind that Light was.

With the recently highly-acclaimed *I Am A Hero* coming from director Sato as well, it's inevitable that comparisons be made. Both films may have been adapted from successful manga series, but it's evident that working with a fresh premise allowed this film auteur to thrive, while the burden of having to match up or surpass the high expectations of a successful film franchise might have been his stumbling block.

Although fans of the earlier Death Note films would probably agree that this is not the best of the franchise's films, thanks to Sato's delivery, it is still a competent sequel that entertains with adrenaline-pumping action, impressive visual effects, addictive theme songs by J-diva Namie Amuro and gratifying nostalgia.

**Summary:** Although not quite measuring up to the brilliance of the original films, fans of the franchise may still enjoy a trip down memory lane with this sequel, particularly with the return of Erika Toda and digitally-engineered cameos by original male leads Fujiwara and Matsuyama.

Jonathan Sung



# DENIAL

**Genre:** Drama **Runtime:** 1h 50min **Rating:** PG13 (Brief Coarse Language) **Director:** Mick Jackson **Cast:** Rachel Weisz, Tom Wilkinson, Timothy Spall, Andrew Scott, Alex Jennings, Caren Pistorius, Mark Gatiss **Opens:** 17 November 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



In 2000, the U.K. saw one of the most explosive libel trials in history: Deborah Lipstadt (Weisz), an American historian, was sued by Holocaust denier David Irving (Spall). This film, based on Lipstadt's book *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier* recounts the dramatic court proceedings. Irving, who contended that Hitler never ordered the genocide of Jews, claimed that Lipstadt had defamed him and damaged his reputation by calling him out on his claims. Lipstadt's legal team is headed by solicitor advocate Anthony Julius (Scott), known for defending Princess Diana during her divorce from Prince Charles. Representing Lipstadt in the courtroom is Richard Rampton QC (Wilkinson), a leading British libel lawyer. With Irving representing himself and Sir Charles Grey (Jennings) as the presiding judge, the high-stakes case draws the attention of the press and Holocaust survivors alike.

It might be tempting for jaded audiences to dismiss *Denial* out of hand as bog-standard Oscar bait. After all, it has respectable actors, most of whom are British, re-enacting true events centring on heavy themes. We'd implore you to set your cynicism aside, because this is a story worth telling. Each passing year puts more distance between us and the atrocities of the Second World War, but films like *Denial* rightly champion the relevance and value of remembering and learning about the Holocaust. Most viewers aren't historians or lawyers, so it falls to screenwriter/playwright David Hare to adapt Lipstadt's book into digestible morsels. The resulting film is engaging, easy to follow and even thrilling at the right junctures.

Director Mick Jackson's body of work, including blockbusters *The Bodyguard* and *Volcano*, might not belie subtlety. However, Jackson did win an Emmy for directing the made-for-HBO biopic *Temple Grandin*. There are times when it feels that the technicalities of the trial have been oversimplified for brevity, clarity and dramatic license, but *Denial* never comes off as overwrought or condescending. There is an effort made to be faithful to actual events:

all the dialogue in the courtroom scenes is taken verbatim from the trial records. The sequence in which Lipstadt, Rampton and the legal team travel to Auschwitz to gather facts was shot on location and is appropriately haunting and sombre. The judicious use of brief flashbacks depicting the Jewish prisoners in the concentration camp are a way for the reality to hit home without the film being emotionally manipulative.

Weisz is an actress who effortlessly embodies fierce intelligence, and the Oscar-winner gets to sink her teeth into a wonderfully meaty role here. Lipstadt is characterised as a principled, serious academic, who doesn't take kindly to being told she cannot stand up for herself and who baulks at being discouraged from testifying. Weisz is an English actress playing an American woman, surrounded by English actors using their natural accents, and is completely believable. In the English justice system, the burden of proof lies with the defendant, not the plaintiff, something which baffles Lipstadt. When Lipstadt clashes with her legal team, we're rooting for her, and she's not afraid to admit she was wrong when she realises the rationale behind their advice.

Seeing as this is based on Lipstadt's first-hand account, it stands to reason that David Irving would be characterised as a thoroughly despicable man, but one could argue that he's done a fine enough job of that on his own. Still, there's a complexity to Irving's views, however skewed, which gets skimmed over in *Denial*. Irving doesn't dispute that Jews were killed by Nazis; he disputes that there was an executive order from Hitler specifically targeting Jews. As depicted in the film, Irving seizes on minutiae, distorting the facts to serve his ideology. He

longs to be taken seriously in academia despite his views. It's been said that it's more fun playing bad guys, and Spall's performance is evidence of that. Spall has an expressive visage, visibly relishing every second of hateful bluster and does a whole lot of indignant frowning.

While Scott may be better known for his villainous roles, he's also fun to watch as Lipstadt's steadfast ally. He's composed but direct and keeps a stiff upper lip. Wilkinson's Rampton looks at first to be a crusty curmudgeon and Lipstadt locks horns with him, but then we get one of the film's best scenes, in which they cordially break bread and come to an understanding. As architectural historian Robert Jan Van Pelt, an expert witness for the defence, Mark Gatiss turns in a quietly moving, thoughtful performance. Caren Pistorius also makes an impact in her relatively small role as Laura Tyler, a young lawyer on her first case. In her introductory scene, Tyler visits Irving's house to deliver materials the defence has gathered, and glowers at him in disgust. Lipstadt later develops a heart-warming, almost maternal bond with Tyler.

*Denial* may not be the most searing or pertinent film based on a true story, but it is insightful and emotional all the same. Bringing history into the courtroom changes things up from your average legal drama, and its real-life heroine is one you'll be cheering for throughout the film.

**Summary:** The court case at the centre of *Denial* is a tricky one to bring to life, but an able cast led by Rachel Weisz at her sharpest and a sound, cogent script make it a moving, thought-provoking piece.

Jedd Jong



# THE WARRIOR'S GATE (勇士之門)

**Genre:** Action/Adventure **Runtime:** 1h 47min **Rating:** PG (Some Violence) **Director:** Matthias Hoene **Cast:** Uriah Shelton, Mark Chao, Ni Ni, Dave Bautista, Henry Mah, Francis Ng, Sienna Guillory, Kara Wai **Opens:** 8 December 2016

**RATING** ★★☆☆☆

An ancient Chinese kingdom is under threat, and only one person can save the land: an American teen gamer from the year 2015. Jack Bronson (Shelton) spends most of his time engrossed in an online game, taking on the persona of a fearsome warrior called the Black Knight. His single mother Annie (Guillory) is struggling to make ends meet, and their house will soon be foreclosed on. Jack works part-time for antiques dealer Mr. Chang (Mah), who entrusts Jack with a priceless chest. One night, the warrior Zhao (Chao) and Princess Sulin (Ni) emerge from the chest through a portal called 'the Warrior's Gate' into Jack's bedroom. Zhao gives Jack the mission of protecting the princess. When Sulin is abducted by barbarians, Jack leaps into the chest after her, and is transported to ancient China. Standing alongside Zhao and with the help of the wizard Wu (Ng), Jack must rescue Sulin from the clutches of the ruthless Barbarian king Arun the Cruel (Bautista).

*The Warrior's Gate* is a co-production between France's EuropaCorp and China's Fundamental Films. EuropaCorp's head honcho Luc Besson produced the film and co-wrote the screenplay with long-time collaborator Robert Mark Kamen. *The Warrior's Gate* comes off as an extremely tired enterprise. It's a bog-standard coming-of-age hero's journey story, combined with fish out of water hijinks. It also feels horribly dated, as if the filmmakers are scrambling about wondering "this is what kids these days like, isn't it?" The production notes refer to *The Warrior's Gate* as "an action-packed adventure film with martial arts derring-do, seen through the eyes of a Gen Z video gamer and set to a hip-hop breakdance beat." Excuse us while we roll our eyes. There's a BMX bike chase scene straight out of the 90s and our hero has a rotund, bespectacled best friend who says "bro" a lot.

Thankfully, *The Warrior's Gate* doesn't take itself too seriously at all, and several jokes land. It does, however, play the Mary Sue (or Marty Stu) trope painfully straight. A meek teenager who is habitually bullied is suddenly thrust into the middle of a grand adventure where he must beat



the bad guys and save the girl despite lacking skills and being unfamiliar with the world. The similarities between *The Warrior's Gate* and 2009's *The Forbidden Kingdom* are inescapable. In that film, it was a martial arts movie geek rather than a gamer who was pulled through a portal into ancient China, but most of the story beats are the same. *The Forbidden Kingdom* boasted Jackie Chan and Jet Li going toe-to-toe on the big screen for the first time, in fights that were choreographed by Yuen Woo-Ping. *The Warrior's Gate* has nothing close to that.

Shelton, whom teen audiences might recognise from the Disney Channel sitcom *Girl Meets World*, plays the designated white saviour. Somehow, an entire contingent of royal guards who have been trained since birth aren't good enough to defend the kingdom: we need a modern-day millennial for that. Jack is meant to be a shut-in who gets lost in his video games, but his BMX skills are on par with a professional stunt rider and when we see Jack with his shirt off, dude's got abs. It's the kind of role Shia LaBeouf would've gotten 15 years ago, and Shelton is frequently just about as annoying.

Taiwanese-Canadian actor Chao, who starred in the TV series *Black and White* and its big-screen spin-off, does the stoic action hero thing well enough. You know the drill: Zhao thinks little of Jack, but the two eventually bond and learn from each other. Zhao teaches Jack martial arts and discipline; Jack teaches Zhao to loosen up a little. Ni Ni's Sulin is the spoiled, feisty princess who spends the bulk of the film in captivity.

Mah's Mr. Chang is yet another ersatz Mr. Miyagi – the presence of that hoary archetype is to be expected, given that Kamen wrote the *Karate Kid* screenplay. As Mr. Chang's magical ancient Chinese counterpart, Ng is the playful sorcerer with a twinkle in his eye. He sounds like James Hong as Mr. Ping in the *Kung Fu Panda* films to a distracting degree.

Bautista is a bright spot here. He's having great fun playing the villainous Arun, who appears to be a riff on Khal Drogo from *Game of Thrones*. He even gets a dim-witted henchman named Brutus. Thanks to his sheer physical presence and comic timing, Bautista comes off as both funny and imposing. Fans of Hong Kong cinema will enjoy the cameo from Kara Wai, who makes a brief appearance as a mountain witch.

While the sub-par visual effects work is most evident during a fight against a trio of tree monsters, the production values benefit from location filming in China. It's obvious that Besson is attempting to jump on the Chinese film industry bandwagon, because that's where all the money is now. *The Warrior's Gate* is formulaic and limp, a clear demonstration of how out-of-touch its filmmakers are.

**Summary:** American teenager is transported to ancient China, saves the day, story goes just how you'd expect. Keep this gate closed.

Jedd Jong



# I Am Not Madame Bovary (我不是潘金莲)

**Genre:** Drama **Rating:** PG13 (Some Sexual References)  
**Runtime:** 2h 08min **Director:** Feng Xiaogang **Cast:** Fan Bingbing, Guo Tao, Da Peng, Zhang Jiayi, Yu Hewei **Opens:** 17 November 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

For those of you still reeling from The Donald's triumphant installation into the Oval Office, we are pleased to announce that it's business as usual at the movies. We are even more delighted to present a little gem called *I Am Not Madame Bovary*, which may well turn out to be the balm for your visions of apocalyptic doom. Instead of bemoaning the pitfalls of liberal democracy, we invite you to contemplate the tangled web of Chinese bureaucracy. Join us for a refreshing reminder that even as America goes up in flames, the rest of the world still has its own problems to face – and its own films to savour.

Let us now savour the problem of *I Am Not Madame Bovary*.

A gentle political satire disguised as one woman's fight against the establishment, *I Am Not Madame Bovary* stars Fan Bingbing as the embattled and embittered Li Xuelian. In order to bluff her husband's employers into coughing up a new apartment, Li divorces him with the understanding that they will remarry once the dust has settled. Unfeeling cad that he is, the husband marries another woman instead, leaving Li with no apartment, no money and no hubby. *I Am Not Madame Bovary* charts Li's journey into the depths of the Chinese bureaucratic system as she tries to get the authorities to annul her divorce. Faced with one uncooperative official after another, Li's pursuit of justice soon assumes epic proportions, stretching over ten years and taking her all the way to the National People's Congress in Beijing.

First things first, let's address that head-scratcher of a title. This film has absolutely nothing to do with Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (or the 2014 film adaptation), but its Chinese title does make reference to another notorious adulteress: Pan Jinlian. The film actually goes about explaining who she is very well in its opening sequence, so we'll dispense with further details here. Suffice it to say that the film's producers evidently felt that such a reference would be lost on non-Chinese filmgoers, therefore substituting it with a Western analogue. The result is this slightly



misleading title that elides much of the film's rich ties to China's literary history.

Title notwithstanding, *I Am Not Madame Bovary* is a compelling product of the PRC's current political climate. It's hard to not think of President Xi Jinping's campaign against bureaucratic corruption when Li Xuelian shows up at the home of the local judge (Da Peng) with fresh produce to sweeten the deal, or when one official assures his superior that the feast in honour of the latter's golden wedding anniversary has *not* been paid for by the citizenry. The provincial-level authorities Li Xuelian comes up against are portrayed as small-minded, self-serving miscreants who bully their subordinates and fawn over their superiors. What's being satirised here isn't so much a form of governance as an ingrained cultural mindset, and it's highly entertaining to watch assorted bureaucrats flap around like headless chickens when Li confounds the rule of law with her intensely personal crusade.

As the woman at the heart of the whole fracas, Li Xuelian is an immensely relatable and three-dimensional protagonist whose unwavering self-conviction is out of place in the patriarchal environs of Chinese society. Fan Bingbing turns in a commendable performance as the unwilling heroine buffeted at all turns by forces beyond her control, anchoring the film with both her

star quality and screen presence. Her groan-inducing turn as Blink in *X-Men: Days of Future Past* ("Hyah! Hyah!") is now officially forgiven.

On a more serious note, it's refreshing to see a Chinese film that, for once, addresses the misogynist underpinnings of a society in which women like Li Xuelian are regularly slut-shamed for not knowing their place. The numerous injustices Li suffers at the hands of the men around her are heartbreaking, yet necessary for reflecting the lived experience of working-class Chinese women.

If one had to find fault with some aspect of *I Am Not Madame Bovary*, it's that it doesn't push its premise far enough. The final twist, while startling, is a gesture toward convention which puts a whole different spin on Li Xuelian's struggle for vindication. The system soldiers on, with the vague promise of taking a more grassroots approach to governance the only concession to Li's decade-long ordeal.

**Summary:** Hollywood's imminent self-destruction in a frenzy of anti-Trump sentiment is no cause for despair, not if the Chinese film industry continues to produce movies like *I Am Not Madame Bovary*.

Leslie Wong



# INCARNATE

**Genre:** Horror/Thriller **Runtime:** TBA **Rating:** TBA **Director:**

Brad Peyton **Cast:** Aaron Eckhart, David Mazouz, Carice Van Houten, Catalina Sandino Moreno, Matt Nable, Carolina Wydra, Emjay Anthony **Opens:** 1 December 2016

**RATING** ★★☆☆☆

Whatever you do, don't call Dr. Seth Ember (Eckhart) an 'exorcist'. What others call 'demons', he calls 'parasitic entities'. It's all strictly scientific, and Ember isn't affiliated with any religious organisation. When the Vatican sends Dr. Camilla Marquez (Moreno) to engage his services, Ember wants nothing to do with it. However, he is enticed by the possibility that the case is connected to the death of his wife and son, the same apparent accident that left him paralysed from the waist down. 11-year-old Cameron Sparrow (Mazouz) is possessed by an arch-demon. His recently-divorced parents Lindsay (Van Houten) and Dan (Nable) fear for their son's life, as it becomes obvious that something evil has taken him over. Ember must dive into Sparrow's subconscious to forcibly oust the entity, but will his own demons get the better of him?

*Incarnate* is the latest horror flick from producer Jason Blum of Blumhouse, who partnered with WWE Studios on this one. It's easy to see why Blum was drawn to the project: what savvy producer would pass up a film with the logline "*Inception* meets *The Exorcist*"? Unfortunately, *Incarnate* is less than the sum of its parts.

This reviewer's interest was initially piqued by the psychological thriller spin put on the usual supernatural horror formula: Dr. Ember proclaims himself to be a man of science, adamant against running errands for the Vatican. The execution is clumsy, with Dr. Ember's assistant Riley (Emily Jackson) uttering the line "each of us is like a wifi hotspot" in one of those 'explain the technical concept to a layperson' exposition scenes. All the imagery associated with demonic possession – bodies flying across the room, pupils turning inky black, a deep spooky voice emanating from a child, and black acid spewed from the mouth – is stuff genre aficionados will find overly familiar.

While Eckhart does invest effort in playing the haunted shell of a man that is Dr. Ember, the character never becomes more than a mere assemblage of clichés. He's a shadow of his



former self, shattered after the trauma of losing his family. Eckhart apparently went method, disguising himself as a wheelchair-bound, mentally ill war veteran to yell at passers-by at Venice Beach in California. We can't say all that effort was worth it. There is a neat device here, though: when we see Ember in reality, he's dishevelled, but when he enters his patients' subconscious, he's clean-shaven and has the use of his legs.

Mazouz plays the creepy kid, bringing nothing new to the table. He's a fine actor, but we've seen all the intense staring and glowing eyes before. This comes right on the heels of *Ouija: Origin of Evil*, in which Lulu Wilson made for a far scarier possessed child. DC Comics fans might find it amusing that Two-Face is exorcising young Batman, seeing as Mazouz plays Bruce Wayne on *Gotham*. As a bonus, Cameron's dad is played by Ra's al Ghul from *Arrow*. Yes, this is how we kept ourselves amused through the dullness of *Incarnate*.

Both female leads are talented performers: we know Van Houten from *Game of Thrones*, and Moreno was nominated for an Oscar for

*Maria Full of Grace*, her first film role. Neither gets very much to do, which can't help but feel like a waste. Ember's assistants Oliver (Keir O'Donnell) and Riley are supposed to add some personality to the proceedings, but they're more than a little ridiculous. It's as if director Brad Peyton thought that if Oliver had tattoos and Riley wore necklaces and a beanie, they'd automatically be hip and with it.

*Incarnate* promises a mind-bending take on the supernatural horror formula, but has no tricks up its sleeves. The twist is easy to see through since it's clear what the film's influences are, and we get a cop-out ending as the cherry on top. Blumhouse is always on the hunt for a new horror franchise, but we hope they let this one lie. Then again, maybe they'll pull an *Ouija: Origin of Evil* and make a killer follow-up.

**Summary:** You'll leave the theatre thinking, "we should have gone deeper". *Inception* with demons should be a whole lot more gripping than this.

Jedd Jong



# MOANA

**Genre:** Animation **Runtime:** 1h 54min **Rating:** PG  
**Director:** Ron Clements, John Musker **Cast:** Auli'i Cravalho,  
 Dwayne Johnson, Temuera Morrison, Rachel House, Nicole  
 Scherzinger, Jemaine Clement, Alan Tudyk **Opens:** 24  
 November 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Disney heeds the call of the ocean with the studio's 56<sup>th</sup> animated feature film. Young Moana (Cravalho), the daughter of chief Tui (Morrison) and Shira (Scherzinger), lives on the Polynesian island of Motonui. Tui insists that his daughter remain on the island to eventually take over the duties of chief, but Moana is unable to resist the beckoning of the sea. Moana's grandmother Tala (House) encourages the girl's instincts, much to Tui's chagrin. When the Motonui islanders find their livelihoods threatened as coconut trees fail to bear fruit and no fish can be caught, Moana sets out to find the one person who can fix the situation. This is the demigod Maui (Johnson), who can shape-shift into various animals. Accompanied by the none-too-bright rooster Hei Hei (Tudyk), Moana and Maui embark on a journey to return a mystical artefact known as the Heart of Te Fiti. Neither is too fond of the other, but they will need to work together to survive the arduous voyage and defeat the deadly lava goddess Te Kā.

*Moana* is directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, Disney animation mainstays whose first film for the studio was 1986's *The Great Mouse Detective*. Clements and Musker kick-started the studio's 'Renaissance' period with *The Little Mermaid* three years later, following that with *Aladdin*, *Hercules*, *Treasure Planet* and *The Princess and the Frog*. The duo undertook extensive research trips to Polynesian islands, and the effort put into authentically capturing and portraying that rich culture is evident in *Moana*. The animation is detailed and vibrant, with some of the finest computer-generated water we've ever seen playing an important role. The ocean is personified as a living entity, with globules of water reminiscent of *The Abyss* extending from the surface to greet Moana.

*Moana* has been billed as being vastly different from all the other Disney Princess films in the studio's canon, but for the most part, it sticks to a tried-and-tested Hero's Journey formula. There's a MacGuffin in the form of the Heart of Te Fiti jewel, there's a quest to go on and hurdles to overcome. While there's a big reveal during the film's climax, there isn't too much here that's very surprising. Moana and Maui's adventures take on an episodic nature. A thrilling action sequence in which the pair is ambushed by a

horde of pygmy pirates called the Kakamora brings *Mad Max: Fury Road* to mind. There isn't really an overarching villain, with Te Kā only really making her presence felt during the film's final battle.

There are plenty of visual gags that work great, including a moment in which Maui hits a snag with his shape-shifting superpowers. Hei Hei, whom Clements describes as "the dumbest character in the history of Disney animation," is endlessly amusing. However, several stabs at self-referential humour seem a little jarring. Maui tacitly comments on Moana's status as a Disney Princess, and there's a particularly on-the-nose reference to *The Little Mermaid*. There's also a joke about how Twitter seems Dreamworks-y.

One of the film's biggest selling points is that, as with *Brave*, there isn't a love interest in sight. Moana has great agency and isn't defined solely by her relationships to any of the other characters. 15-year-old Cravalho was the last of hundreds of Polynesian women to audition. She makes her feature-film acting debut here, bringing an appropriate blend of plucky adventurer and 21<sup>st</sup> Century teenager to her performance. While Moana is a great character, there are familiar elements to her – she wants adventure in a great wide somewhere, and longs to get out from under the thumb of her overprotective father. It's nice that the character is given a noticeably different body type from the standard svelte Disney princess, and the character's beauty is showcased in beautifully-lit magic hour scenes.

Johnson's trademark charm and charisma is on display as Maui, a self-centred demigod who craves adulation. Maui's facial expressions appear to be modelled directly on Johnson's, with the signature 'people's eyebrow' look getting the spotlight. The character isn't intended to be wholly likeable, and while the relationship between Maui and Moana does get satisfactory development, it can be tedious at times. Musker and Clements have cleverly worked some 2D animation into the film, in the form of Maui's tattoos. 'Mini Maui', who acts as the demigod's conscience, is a clever way of giving Maui his own sidekick.

We're not sure why Alan Tudyk was needed solely to make clucking sound effects, but in any case, we're glad that Hei Hei and Pua the pig don't talk. Bit of a shame that the adorable Pua was left behind on Motonui and didn't join Moana, Maui and Hei Hei on their voyage. House's Gramma Tala is the stock 'wise grandmother' archetype through and through, but her interactions with Moana do provide some of the film's most emotional moments. Jemaine Clement pops up voicing a colossal crab monster named Tamatoa, in what is probably the film's low point. It seems like such a calculation, that this is the designated scene-stealing supporting villain. Clement's Tim Curry-type delivery is all too similar to his performance in the *Rio* films.

The aspect of *Moana* that most disappointed this reviewer is the music. Please put away your pitchforks. Oceanic music group Te Vaka, Mark Mancina and vaunted Broadway impresario Lin-Manuel Miranda wrote the film's music, with Miranda writing the lyrics. They're all fine, but aren't as hummable as one would expect. Maui may have his magical fish hook but these songs seem to lack hooks of their own. The Disney animated canon has produced such memorable tunes as Part of Your World, A Whole New World, Beauty and the Beast and, yes, Let It Go. Alas, nothing in *Moana* is that instantly catchy and memorable. This reviewer is sure the songs will grow on him, but we were hoping for songs that cling to you immediately.

While *Moana* delivers grand adventure and meticulously-animated spectacle, it doesn't hit the heights of sublime poignancy which Disney has proven capable of. It's a fine quest movie with a few lulls and songs that are okay at best, but lots of kids are bound to gravitate to the spirited heroine. *Inner Workings*, the short film preceding the feature, is delightful and infectiously silly. Stick around for a post-credits gag.

**Summary:** Splendid animation and a sincerity in putting Polynesian culture on the big screen offset Moana's formulaic elements and somewhat forgettable songs.

Jedd Jong



# THE MENU (导火新闻线)

**Genre:** Drama **Runtime:** 1h 30min **Rating:** M18 (Sexual Violence) **Director:** Ben Fong **Cast:** Ng Mang Tat, Gregory Wong, Catherine Chau, Kate Yeung, Akina Fong, Ben Yeung, Jeana Ho, Yu Silu **Opens:** 10 November 2016

**RATING** ★★★★★

It has been said that Hong Kong cinema has been on the decline since the late 1990s, never quite regaining its former golden glory days back in the 70s, 80s and early 90s. Some blame it on rampant piracy, some lament that it is overproduction resulting in quantity over quality, while others bemoan how more and more filmmakers opt to over-emulate Hollywood to over-CGI, often resulting in focusing on style over substance and losing the heart and spirit that made successful Hong Kong films what they were in yesteryears. So it is great pleasure and surprise that every now and then a select few sleeper critically acclaimed films comes along and proves there is still hope for the Hong Kong film industry after all. *The Menu* is one of these films.

Similar in essence to the 2016 Oscar Best Picture winner film *Spotlight*, *The Menu* also follows the struggles, dilemmas and battles of a team of journalists as they race against time to reveal the truth behind a scandalous sex crime that had been covered up by a corrupt legal system. Whilst *Spotlight* featured the shocking true story of The Boston Globe's "Spotlight" team's exposure of the paedophile sexual abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Boston, whereas the central story of *The Menu* is a fictitious case, the latter is no less thought provoking and compelling as the former.

Sequel to the 2015 Hong Kong Television Network (HKTV) drama series of the same title, *The Menu* film continues following the editorial team for Smart Post as they pursue the truth behind a brutal rape-murder case. Despite damning evidence, the murderer Ko Yin Yan had been acquitted having bribed the key witness into giving false testimony. Although the witness later confessed this to the deceased's father Tam Yui-chi (Ng), Tam was unable to bring the case to trial again due to the procedural defence of "double jeopardy".

Pushed to the brink of despair, Tam who is a TV station technician holds Ko hostage, with the entire crew of the talk show programme that Ko was invited to be a guest on, threatening to blow



them all up, unless the government immediately abolished the double jeopardy rule and retries Ko in court. To worsen the predicament, standing in opposition to Smart Post are the journalist team behind Flash Post, determined to outdo their competition by any despicable means possible, even if it meant putting the lives of innocents at jeopardy.

Impressing in his role as Tam is Ng. Known to Gen Xers as the long-time comedian collaborator of Stephen Chow, Ng has since become a better-rounded actor, even garnering a few acting awards for his non-comedic dramatic roles along the way. In this film, Ng convincingly portrays the wrath, desperation and despair of a man pushed to his limits by the Hong Kong legal system in seeking justice for the wrongful death of his daughter.

Besides Ng, the rest of the cast, especially the returning stars from the TV series (Wong, Chau Teung and Fong) equally held their own, delivering stellar, believable performances as the rivalling journalists of Smart Post and Flash Post, no less impressive than the multi-awards winning or nominated performances of the cast of *Spotlight*.

Acting kudos aside, high praise has to be accorded to the writing team helmed by Pun Man Hung, as well as the direction of Fong too. Carrying forward their great work from the original goggle box series to this silver screen sequel, the creative team strikes the right balance, not only creating and executing a highly entertaining, engaging and thrilling dramatic film, but also one that implores the audience to question how important integrity is in the field of journalism.

Look out for the memorable scene in which Flash Post journalist Fung (Yeung) chances upon a little girl unaware of her perilous predicament, being seconds away from being crushed by a collapsing structure that is literally hanging by a thread. Instead of rescuing the girl, as what Smart Post's bleeding heart news editor Lok Ka Fai (Wong) did right in the nick of time, Fung callously chose to stand poised and ready to capture the ominous scene about to unfold. No better than Fung, his editor-in-chief at Flash Post, Sun Yun Ling (Yu) even looks to capitalizing on the tragedy of the hostage situation by demanding her staff to be the first in posting obituaries on their news website of any victims who perish, so as to beat Smart Post

at click rates.

Referencing the Pulitzer Prize winning photojournalist's famous photo, "The Starving of Sudan", which depicted a vulture eyeing as its prey a frail little girl who had collapsed stricken by famine, through the character of Smart Post photojournalist Mallory Mak (Yeung), this film challenges its characters within and even the audience to consider what would they do if they were in that scenario. Whether to forgo the photo and save the girl, to shoot the photo for the mercenary sake of its media and market value, or to look at the big picture and shoot the photo so as to create public awareness and trigger action to salvage the crisis?

In response to this dilemma, the film re-evaluates the philosophy of "Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish", a quote taken from former editor of the Whole Earth Catalog Kevin Kelly that was made famous by Steve Jobs in his 2005 Stanford Commencement speech. In one harrowing scene, a mob of photojournalists fanatically chased down a minibus that has spun out of control as a result of its driver suffering a heart attack, not to prevent but to capture on camera the ongoing chaos and aftermath of the tragic accident that ensued. This is but one of many moments in the film that reflect and magnify just how ugly the truth of the insatiable appetite of today's modern press is for attention grabbing headline news in its pursuit of monetary profit and readership or internet hits numbers.

In spite of this, as Smart Post's interim Editor-in-Chief Fong Ying (Chau) aptly sums up at the end of the film, it is crucial that besides staying hungry for news and ambition, journalists should also maintain a sense of "foolishness". Going against the herd mentality and fighting for what might not be to your or your publication's best benefit might be deemed to be "foolish", but it takes guts to do the right thing morally and ethically. If media workers should come away from anything from this film, this underlying message should be it.

**Summary:** The Hong Kong film equivalent to this year's Oscar Best Picture winner, you don't need to be a fan of the HKTV drama series to be wowed by this thought provoking and inspiring film sequel that explores the extent to which journalism is willing to sacrifice humanity and ethics in the pursuit of readership numbers.

Jonathan Sung



# THE WHOLE TRUTH

**Genre:** Drama **Runtime:** 1h 34min **Rating:** NC16 (Sexual Violence) **Director:** Courtney Hunt **Cast:** Keanu Reeves, Renée Zellweger, Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Gabriel Basso, Jim Belushi, Jim Klock **Opens:** 24 November 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Keanu Reeves played a lawyer in 1997's *Devil's Advocate*, in which he dealt with unexpected supernatural goings-on. In this legal thriller, Reeves is back in the courtroom, *sans* Al Pacino as Satan. Reeves plays Richard Ramsay, a Louisiana defence attorney. As a favour to his friend Loretta Lassiter (Zellweger), Ramsay defends Loretta's son Mike (Basso), on trial for murder. Mike is accused of fatally stabbing his father Boone (Belushi), in what appears to be an open-and-shut case. However, as the trial progresses, disturbing aspects about who Boone really was come to light. Ramsay's new colleague, a young lawyer named Janelle (Mbatha-Raw), tries to get to the bottom of an increasingly tricky case.

*The Whole Truth* was going to star Daniel Craig, but he abruptly dropped out four days before production was set to begin, with Reeves stepping in for him. We can't say for sure if *The Whole Truth* would've been better with Craig in the starring role. While the whodunit central to *The Whole Truth* is mildly intriguing, nothing in the movie reels one in. For all the narrative's twists and turns, *The Whole Truth* ends up being dull and generic. One of the pitfalls of a courtroom drama film is that this is a genre that seems more at home on TV than on the big screen. Something like *12 Angry Men* doesn't come along all that often, and it will take more than a run-of-the-mill procedural potboiler to make audiences sit up and take notice. The device of flashbacks told from the point of view of possibly unreliable narrators is a good trick, but one that's been employed in similar movies before.

There's no novelty to *The Whole Truth*, with all the characters fitting familiar archetypes. There's trouble in paradise as a wealthy family is thrown into crisis, and as a long-time friend of said family, our hero feels an obligation to sort things out. Director Courtney Hunt, who helmed the gritty yet sensitive Oscar-nominated *Frozen River*, seems to be going through the motions here. She has directed episodes of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, and this could well have been a middling episode of that long-running



series. Curiously enough, the screenplay was initially reported to be by veteran screenwriter Nicholas Kazan, but the end credits state that it's by one 'Rafael Jackson'. We couldn't find any substantial information about Jackson, and Kazan retains executive producer credit, so it's not unreasonable to speculate that this is a pseudonym. Was Kazan embarrassed to be credited as writing the film?

Reeves has a reputation for being wooden, but he's found success in the right roles – one needs only look to *John Wick* for evidence of that. Alas, Reeves' stilted performance detracts from the film's potential to be riveting and intense. Ramsay, who spouts lines like, "just assume everyone's screwing everyone else until proven otherwise," is meant to have a façade of glib confidence. However, there's a crisis of conscience roiling beneath the surface, as he's torn between the incriminating, undeniable evidence and helping his friend. Reeves appears unable to play all these notes, and perhaps Craig would've brought more swagger to the part, making Ramsay harder to pin down and therefore more entertaining to watch.

This was Zellweger's first film after a six-year hiatus, filmed before *Bridget Jones's Baby*. She's the standout performer here, playing a trophy wife who's vulnerable and lost after her husband's murder – or is that all an act? Zellweger's raw, convincing performance means we're never quite sure one way or

another. As the accused teenager, Basso doesn't get too much to do, since, much to Ramsay's frustration, Mike chooses to stay silent. When the veil is lifted and we discover what's going on with Mike, Basso gets his moment to shine.

Mbatha-Raw injects the dreary proceedings with much-needed energy, and has no problems coming across as attentive and intelligent. The scene in which Janelle cross-examines a character witness is the film's strongest. While Belushi is fine as a well-off, none-too-pleasant philanderer, it will be a challenge for most audiences to disassociate him from his high-profile comedic roles, most of which are hapless everymen.

*The Whole Truth's* big twist should be a gut-punch, but it registers more as, 'oh well, so that's what happened. Doesn't make a whole lot of sense. What should I get for dinner?' We won't go into the spoilerific specifics, but the use of sexual assault in the narrative comes off as a cheap shock tactic. It all adds up to an underwhelming courtroom drama that is neither absorbing nor thrilling, but just sort of sits there.

**Summary:** Keanu Reeves' flat performance and a lack of urgency are two of several factors that sink this mediocre courtroom drama.

Jedd Jong



# SING

**Genre:** Animation **Runtime:** 1h 50min **Rating:** PG  
**Director:** Garth Jennings **Cast:** Matthew McConaughey, Reese Witherspoon, Seth MacFarlane, Scarlett Johansson, John C. Reilly, Tori Kelly, Taron Egerton, Nick Kroll, Nick Offerman, Garth Jennings, Peter Serafinowicz, Jennifer Saunders, Jennifer Hudson, Beck Bennett, Leslie Jones, Jay Pharoah **Opens:** 8 December 2016

**RATING** ★★☆☆☆

Illumination Entertainment aims to unite all creatures great and small through the power of song in this animated musical comedy. Buster Moon (McConaughey) the koala is running out of options. After a string of flops, the showbiz entrepreneur's theatre will soon be foreclosed upon. Moon and his business partner Eddie (Reilly) the sheep mount a singing competition to save the theatre. The contestants include harried housewife Rosita (Witherspoon) the pig, the flamboyant pig Gunter (Kroll) who is paired with Rosita, an arrogant jazz crooning mouse named Mike (MacFarlane), punk-rocker porcupine Ash (Johansson), stage fright-afflicted elephant Meena (Kelly), and Johnny (Egerton), a mountain gorilla who goes against the wishes of his criminal father Marcus (Serafinowicz) by pursuing his passion for singing. As Moon seeks the financial assistance of wealthy diva Nana Noodleman (Saunders), Eddie's grandmother, this motley crew of animal performers must sing to save the theatre.

"Hey, let's put on a show!" is a stock trope as old as Hollywood itself. To save an orphanage/theatre/hospital/school from being demolished, an unlikely group must draw on their talents and mount a fund-raising production. *Babes in Arms*, starring Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland, codified this formula. *Sing* adds funny anthropomorphic animals and top 40 hits to the mix, but the results feel rote. Illumination Entertainment is quickly gaining on the big boys like Pixar and Dreamworks, what with the Minions taking over the world and all. *Sing* is the studio's second film this year, following *The Secret Life of Pets*. *Sing* is probably Illumination's most Dreamworks-like film yet, with its celebrity voice cast and surfeit of pop tracks. For a studio trying to set itself apart from the competition, perhaps that's not the wisest move.

*Sing* suffers immensely for being released in the same year as Disney's *Zootopia*. The design of *Zootopia* was thoroughly thought through, and each frame was bursting with clever, amusing details to notice. In *Sing*, anthropomorphic animals are plonked into a non-descript coastal city. While some might appreciate an animated



film that isn't hyperkinetic, *Sing* lacks dynamism and forward momentum. There's a nicely staged set piece in the middle and the film's climax is enjoyable, but *Sing* lacks the energetic visuals and propulsive pacing of *Zootopia* or *The Secret Life of Pets*. For a film with lots of dancing in it, it feels oddly static in parts.

As a tribute to old-fashioned movie musicals, *Sing* seems half-hearted at best, and the selection of songs isn't especially inspired. There are shades of *A Chorus Line* and *The Producers*, but there's no thematic cohesion to the musical numbers, and *Sing* often feels like an animated variety show with a bit of plot tacked on. If you roll your eyes whenever a cheery pop ditty shows up in a Dreamworks movie, prepare to cringe through a good amount of *Sing*. This reviewer did appreciate that Queen and David Bowie's *Under Pressure* makes an appearance, when it seems more likely that the filmmakers would've gone with the *Under Pressure* rip-off *Ice Ice Baby*.

To accommodate the large cast of characters, most of the arcs are simplistic. McConaughey delivers an amiable, earnest performance, but seems miscast. There's the dissonance of a Texan drawl coming out of a koala's mouth – perhaps Hugh Jackman would've been a better fit, especially since Jackman has more of a slick, old-school showman vibe than McConaughey does. It might be difficult for kids to care about a character who can't pay the electric bill to keep his theatre operational – there's a difference between mature themes and adult worries.

Rosita is the overtaxed stay-at-home mom who struggles to care for her 25 children and jumps at the chance to break out of her routine and embrace her inner diva. It's a predictable arc and Witherspoon's performance isn't distinctive. MacFarlane's character is smug and self-important, with a penchant for big band jazz – we can't argue with that casting. Johansson's Ash is spurned by her boyfriend and is out

to prove that she can make it as a solo act – shooting quills into the audience while rocking out is pretty punk. Director Jennings' cameo as Miss Crawley, a senile green iguana with a glass eye who works as Moon's assistant, might not be a patch on Brad Bird as Edna Mode in *The Incredibles* but it has its moments.

The big revelation here is Taron Egerton of *Kingsman: The Secret Service* fame, who shows off some impressive pipes. We've often seen the archetype of a kid who marches to the beat of his own drummer, much to the chagrin of his parents – Johnny the Gorilla is not unlike Lenny from *A Shark's Tale*, who wanted out of the mob headed by his father. The Cockney street tough accent sounds right coming out of a gorilla.

If you were moved by Tori Kelly's rendition of *Hallelujah* during the In Memoriam segment at this year's Emmys, you'll get to hear her sing it again here – never mind that the song is overused. Since Kelly is the one professional singer in the principal cast, it's a shame that Meena sings as little as she does. Jennifer Hudson, as the younger version of Nana Noodleman, gets to open the film with a soaring rendition of *Golden Slumbers*, and then is absent from the rest of the film.

*Sing* isn't just clichéd, it's a gathering of lots of clichés in one place. If singing and dancing cartoon animals are all you're looking for, then *Sing* has you covered – but then again, the history of animation is filled with singing and dancing animals. *Sing* has several entertaining sequences and a talented voice cast, but is too generic for its own good.

**Summary:** You know how this song goes: *Sing's* "let's put on a show plot" doesn't offer any surprises, and will inevitably be compared to stronger animated films from this year.

Jedd Jong





## DISNEY'S MOANA SUBSCRIPTION SPECIAL!

Receive a **Disney's Moana Movie Hamper** & **12** Issues of **F\*\*\* Magazine** worth over \$600.

# Disney MOANA

**In Cinemas Nov 24**

Movie Hamper consisting of

Man's T-Shirt, Woman's T-Shirt, Beach Towel, Sticker Sheet, Eyewear Storage Bag, Tote Bag, 8GB USB, Teaser & Main Movie Posters.



© 2016 Disney



**Synopsis:** From Walt Disney Animation Studios comes *Moana*, a sweeping, CG-animated feature film about an adventurous teenager who sails out on a daring mission to save her people. During her journey, Moana (voice of Auli'i Cravalho) meets the once-mighty demigod Maui (voice of Dwayne Johnson), who guides her in her quest to become a master wayfinder. Together, they sail across the open ocean on an action-packed voyage, encountering enormous monsters and impossible odds, and along the way, Moana fulfills the ancient quest of her ancestors and discovers the one thing she's always sought: her own identity.

☐ **YES!** I would like to get the **F\*\*\*/Disney's Moana** Package at \$249.00

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ NRIC: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M / F Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Adr \_\_\_\_\_  
ess: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to receive future updates and special promotions of **F\*\*\*** and its relevant partners

### MODE OF PAYMENT

☐ Cheque/Bank Draft number: \_\_\_\_\_  
of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to be crossed and made payable to:

**Sterne & Lears Global Pte Ltd**

71 Ayer Rajah Crescent, #07-18, Singapore 139951

### Terms & Conditions

• No official receipt will be issued for payment made by cheque • F\*\*\* will replace your collectible with the next preferred choice when your choice item is not available • Please allow four to six weeks for delivery of your first issue • Subscriptions is non-refundable and non-transferable • Subscription promotion valid till end of this month • All entries are the property of Sterne & Lears Global Pte Ltd and may be used for future marketing purposes • Notification will be sent via email for collection of subscription gift(s) • All gift(s) are given while stocks last and are based on a first-come-first-serve basis • The management reserves the right to replace any gift(s) of up to equal value • The gift must be accepted as it is; no exchange will be allowed • Subscription offer applicable to readers in Singapore only • Subscription hotline: 6778 3088 • Other terms & conditions apply.



# ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY SUBSCRIPTION SPECIAL!

Get **6** issues of **F\*\*\* Magazine** & stand a chance to win an exclusive



**Synopsis:** From Lucasfilm comes the first of the Star Wars standalone films, *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, an all-new epic adventure. In a time of conflict, a group of unlikely heroes band together on a mission to steal the plans to the Death Star, the Empire's ultimate weapon of destruction. This key event in the Star Wars timeline brings together ordinary people who choose to do extraordinary things, and in doing so, become part of something greater than themselves.



## ROGUE ONE A STAR WARS STORY

**In Cinemas Dec 15**

Movie Hamper worth over \$400  
consisting of

Man's T-Shirt, Woman's T-Shirt, Keychain,  
Coffee Mug, Notebook, Cap, Drawstring Bag,  
Teaser & Main Movie Posters.



© 2016 & TM Lucasfilm Ltd.

☐ **YES!** I would like to get the **F\*\*\*/Rogue One: A Star Wars Story** Package at \$47.40

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ NRIC: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M / F Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Adr  
ess: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to receive future updates and special promotions of **F\*\*\*** and its relevant partners

### MODE OF PAYMENT

☐ Cheque/Bank Draft number: \_\_\_\_\_  
of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to be crossed and made payable to:

**Sterne & Lears Global Pte Ltd**

71 Ayer Rajah Crescent, #07-18, Singapore 139951

#### Terms & Conditions

• No official receipt will be issued for payment made by cheque • F\*\*\* will replace your collectible with the next preferred choice when your choice item is not available • Please allow four to six weeks for delivery of your first issue • Subscriptions is non-refundable and non-transferable • Subscription promotion valid till end of this month • All entries are the property of Sterne & Lears Global Pte Ltd and may be used for future marketing purposes • Notification will be sent via email for collection of subscription gift(s) • All gift(s) are given while stocks last and are based on a first-come-first-serve basis • The management reserves the right to replace any gift(s) of up to equal value • The gift must be accepted as it is; no exchange will be allowed • Subscription offer applicable to readers in Singapore only • Subscription hotline: 6778 3088 • Other terms & conditions apply.







MISSING  
MISSED  
AN  
ISSUE...

Get your back issues  
**NOW!**

Last 5 Issues:

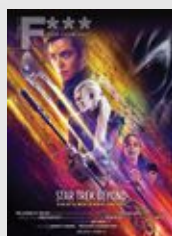
Issue #76



Issue #77



Issue #78



Issue #79



Issue #80  
(Last Month's Issue)



**Limited Back Issues  
Available Now!**

Order your copy now for **S\$10**  
per book (inclusive of postage and  
packing within Singapore) by post.

You can also browse and order all  
our back issues  
@ [www.fmovieamag.com](http://www.fmovieamag.com)

My order: Issue #  No of Copies:  Issue #  No of Copies:  Issue #  No of Copies:   
Issue #  No of Copies:  Issue #  No of Copies:  Issue #  No of Copies:   
Issue #  No of Copies:  Issue #  No of Copies:  **Complete Set -From #01**   
Issue #  No of Copies:  Issue #  No of Copies:  ☐ Include ☐ Exclude - last month's issue.

Name:

NRIC:  Gender: M / F Age:

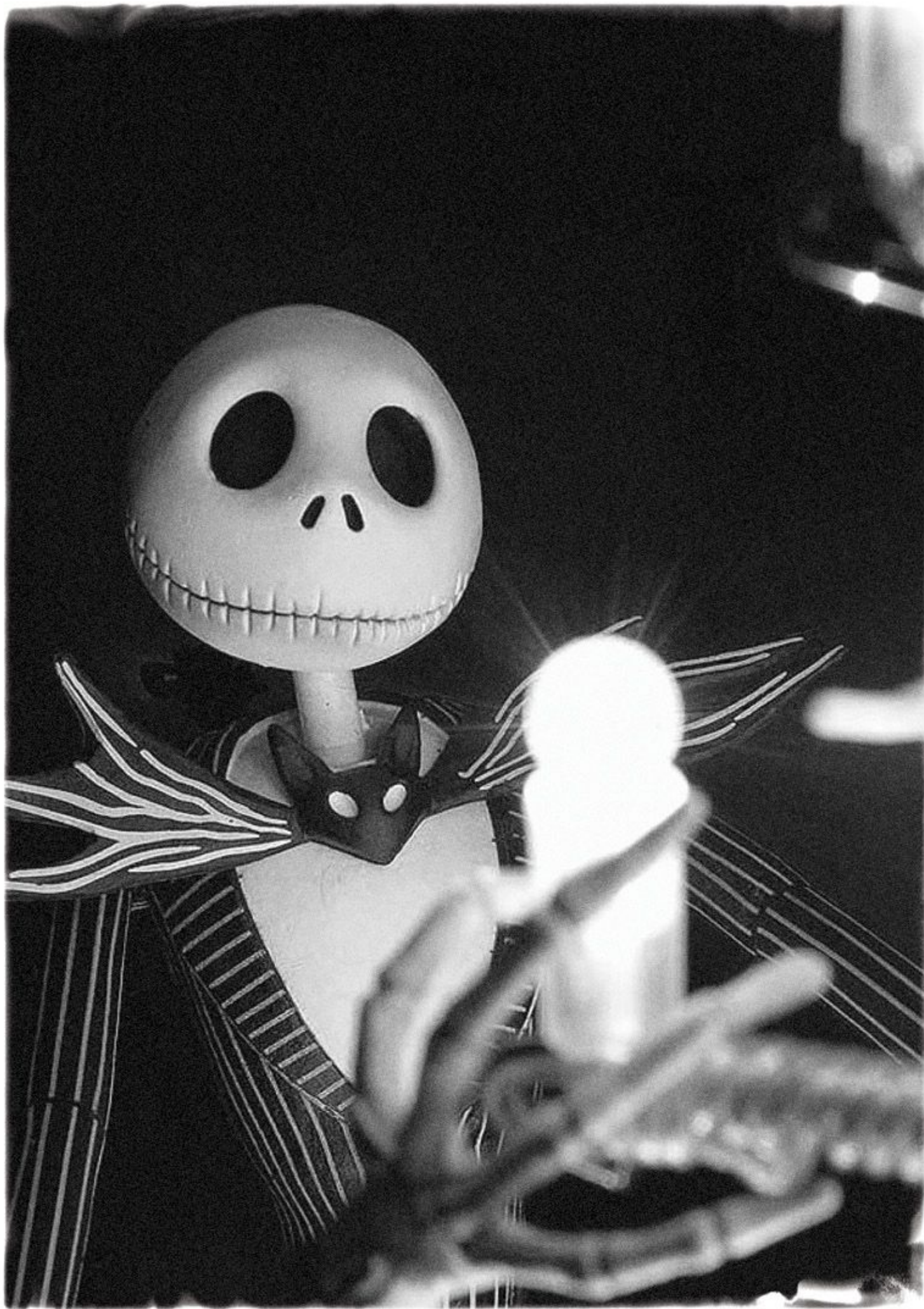
Address:

Occupation:

Mobile:  E-mail:

**MODE OF PAYMENT:** Cheque / Bank Draft made payable to: STERNE & LEARS GLOBAL PTE LTD • 71 Ayer Rajah Crescent, #07-18. Singapore 139951 • Email : [f@sterne-lears.com](mailto:f@sterne-lears.com)





Jack Skellington (voiced by Chris Sarandon) - *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993)





# 27th Singapore International Film Festival

23 Nov —→ 4 Dec 2016

TELLING  
OUR STORIES

#sgiff2016 [sgiff.com](http://sgiff.com)

An event of



SINGAPORE  
MEDIA  
FESTIVAL

Hosted by



INFOCOMM  
MEDIA  
DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY

Presenting Sponsor



MARINA BAY Sands  
SINGAPORE

Official Festival Time Partner



IWC  
SCHAFFHAUSEN

Official Airline



SINGAPORE  
AIRLINES

Festival Film Magazine



F\*\*\*  
FILM F\*\*\* PART



F\*\*\*  
FILM F\*\*\* PART

[fmoviemag.com](http://fmoviemag.com)





# 27th Singapore International Film Festival

23 Nov —→ 4 Dec 2016

Get your tickets from  
all authorised SISTIC  
outlets today!

#sgiff2016 [sgiff.com](http://sgiff.com)

## OVER 160 FILMS FROM 52 COUNTRIES



### OPENING & SPECIAL PRESENTATION FILMS

A gala showcase of the most talked about  
films from today's leading filmmakers



### SILVER SCREEN AWARDS

Nominated films in the Asian Feature Film  
Competition and Southeast Asian Short  
Film Competition



### SINGAPORE PANORAMA

The most anticipated platform for the  
newest local films



### ASIAN VISION

New works by both renowned auteurs and  
future visionaries of Asian Cinema



### CINEMA TODAY

Established and upcoming international  
filmmakers in world cinema



### IMAGINE

Experimental films and new possibilities  
of cinema



### CLASSICS

Canonical masterpieces and often  
overlooked gems of Asian and world cinema



### FOCUS: NAOMI KAWASE

Delve into the works of one of the most  
respected and adroit filmmakers of  
contemporary Japanese cinema



### FOCUS: MUTATING MYTHOLOGIES - HYBRID CINEMA OF LATIN AMERICA

This focus explores the landscape of Latin  
America through its mythologies



### FOR NIZAM: A RETROSPECTIVE

Experience the films of Abdul Nizam, one  
of the most original and distinctive voices  
in Singapore cinema



### TRIBUTE TO FRUIT CHAN

Fruit Chan's films have been reinventing  
genre traditions since the 90s, with a  
ceaseless enquiry into Hong Kong identity



### AN EVENING WITH DARREN ARONOFSKY

Join us for an intimate session with one of  
America's leading auteurs, Darren Aronofsky

For full programme lineup,  
visit [SGIFF.COM](http://SGIFF.COM)





FROM THE CREATORS OF ZOOTOPIA & FROZEN

Disney  
**MOANA**

**IN CINEMAS NOV 24**

**ALSO IN 3D**

 WaltDisneyStudios

#FindYourWay

#MoanaSG

DisneyMoana.asia

Rating To Be Advised ©2016 Disney



K A T E B E C K I N S A L E



PROTECT THE BLOODLINE

# UNDERWORLD

## BLOOD WARS

IN 3D

SCREEN GENIUS AND LAKESHORE ENTERTAINMENT PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH LSTAR CAPITAL A LAKESHORE ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH SKETCH FILMS "UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS" THEO JAMES LARA POLVER  
JAMES FAULKNER AND CHARLES DANCE EDITOR JULIE HUTCHINSON CSA EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SUZANNE M. SMITH AND MICHAEL WANDUACHER PRODUCED BY BOJANA WIKTOVIC WITH PETER AMUNDSON WRITTEN BY ONDREA NEKYASIL DIRECTED BY KARL WALTER LINDELAUF AKA V&A  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ERIC RED JAMES MCGUARDIE SKIP WILLIAMSON HENRY WINTERSTERN BEN WAISBREN PRODUCED BY TOM ROSENBERG GARY LUCCHESI LEN WISEMAN RICHARD WRIGHT DAVID KERN BASED UPON CHARACTERS CREATED BY KEVIN GREVILLEY AND LEN WISEMAN & DANNY McBRIDE  
LAKESHORE ENTERTAINMENT SKETCH FILMS IN CINEMAS DEC 1 CORY GOODMAN ANNA FOERSTER SONY PICTURES  
#UnderworldMovie SonyPictures.com.sg UnderworldBloodWarsMovie.net

Rating To Be Advised